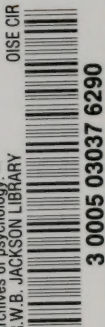


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# Written Composition and Characteristics of Personality

BY

FLOYD H. ALLPORT, LYNNETTE WALKER,  
and ELEANOR LATHERS

ARCHIVES OF PSYCHOLOGY

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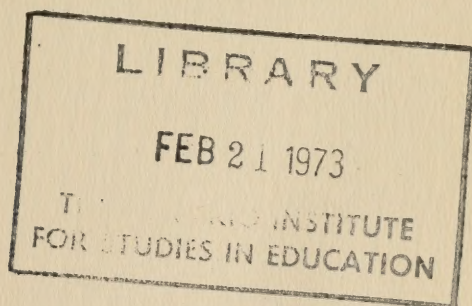
School of Citizenship and Public Affairs  
Syracuse University

A report of a study conducted at Syracuse University in 1933-34; being one phase of an inquiry into the "Methods, Purposes and Effectiveness of the Training of College Freshmen in Written Composition," conducted under the administrative direction of Burges Johnson, Litt.D., and Helene W. Hartley, Ph.D., under a grant from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

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# WRITTEN COMPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONALITY

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# Written Composition and Characteristics of Personality

## I

### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

A teacher of English composition in a modern college is faced by a dilemma which extends throughout our entire educational program. This dilemma is the issue between minimum essentials for large numbers and 'quality production' in the developing of the latent capacities of individual students. It seems to be in keeping both with the temper and the requirements of our age to consider courses in composition as training schools for 'mass production.' There are certain standard requirements, variously stated by different authorities, such as logical argument, planning, organization, clearness, conciseness, simplicity, force, and coherence, against which each student, regardless of individual characteristics, must be measured. If he comes up to these standards in his class work and, what is more important though not assured, if he can carry over the effects of his college teaching to his subsequent life, we believe that he will be fitted for the various linguistic tasks which our regimented and specialized social organization may lay upon him. He will know, for example, how to write for a newspaper, how to describe and report accurately upon an event or situation, how to conduct business through the use of words in a precise and orderly manner, how to write and speak in performing the ordinary amenities of social life. And out of all this, we believe, will emerge an individual who is cultivated according to modern standards. Since the requirements to be met are of a uniform kind, teachers of composition quite naturally mark out certain standard categories of errors which are to be avoided. Awkwardness, obscurity, bad sentence structure, mixed metaphors, 'fine writing,' verbosity, and the like are symbolized by marks of correction which are the same for the themes of every student and their

---

<sup>1</sup> A report of a study conducted at Syracuse University in 1933-1934 as a part of an investigation into the methods, purposes, and effectiveness of the training of college freshmen in written composition made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, through the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This grant was administered under the general direction of Dr. Burges Johnson.

The writers wish to acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Mrs. Charlotta Gallup in the preparation of the program for reading and matching the themes, and also the help of Mrs. Mildred Richmond in preparing the manuscript.



use is directed toward shaping the student's writing to meet the standard requirements, rather than toward the student as a personality. Modern college training in composition seems to be based upon a cross-sectional view. It is a moving of an army of writers up to a desired front, rather than a biographical intimacy with the struggles of individual students.

Practical and essential as such a view of the teaching of writing may be at the present day, there is another aspect which ought not to be neglected. If we are to find the basic reasons for certain errors, if we are to discover the full potentialities for good writing which our classes afford, if we are to assure ourselves that the things which a student learns in the criticism of his daily themes will be carried over to his use of the language in general, we must study the writing process not merely as a cross-sectional evaluation of a group, but as a history of development in individuals. Without minimizing the practical necessity for uniform standards, and the social or vocational tests which a student must face throughout life, it is important to realize that this 'societal' requirement, which regards language as a tool for helping an individual to play a certain rôle in social organization, is often, from the standpoint of the individual himself, a rather arbitrary affair. Though he feels that he must adapt himself to such standards, this cross-sectional view of training in writing is really one which is derived by cutting arbitrarily across the life stream (or developmental process) of a large number of individuals, each of whom differs from every other, not only in his pattern of traits and capacities, but in his manner of expression and his motivation. Until we come to regard students from a 'longitudinal' standpoint, in which each personality has a uniqueness of its own, we cannot fully understand how the minimum essentials themselves are acquired, how certain characteristic faults may arise, or how they may be prevented; nor can we envisage the part which the student's language capacities may be able to play in his career and his social adjustments of the future.

There is need, therefore, of supplementing our uniform 'mass production' methods by an approach, both in research and teaching, which will present writing not as a common segment of the behavior of all educated people, but as the peculiar expression of separate individuals, of personalities undergoing a continuity and development in time. It is desirable to look at the activity of writing not merely as a tool for social and practical ends (though in part it has that purpose), but also as an end in itself. We cannot



fully understand what a particular student does in his written composition unless we view that composition as a field in which he is attempting to find himself and to achieve self-expression.

If a piece of writing is to be merely a task in which the student can show his proficiency and through which he can attain a satisfactory grade or a word of commendation, it will not usually mean very much from the standpoint of motive. It will be worth to the student, immediately, just what that grade or commendation may be worth; and no more. If, on the other hand, a composition is to be thought of as an adventure in which the student is trying to create something, whether his creation be in the world of description, of fantasy, or of abstract thinking, the play of his motive may be deep and powerful. Psychologists are beginning to approach the study of personality by asking such questions as: What does an individual, throughout all his voluntary activities, seem to be striving to accomplish? What type of activity does he seem most to enjoy? In what general way does he react to the world about him? How is he seeking, consciously or unconsciously, to vindicate himself and to show his true worth? What, as a personality, is he continually *trying to do*? Not in every case are such questions capable of a clear or definite answer. The degree in which we can tell what activity or achievement an individual is seeking, as well as the degree in which he may be really trying to accomplish *anything*, is variable from one person to another. Nevertheless, if we look at a piece of writing as a possible index of what the student who wrote it is 'trying to do,' not only in this particular essay but in his writing generally, and even, behind that, in life itself, we may discover a new meaning in the task of teaching composition. It is because of the possibilities arising from these considerations that the following experiments have been conducted.

## II

### THE DEFINITION OF INDIVIDUALITY IN WRITING

Our effort to plan an individualized study of writing arises not only from a desire to reach down to fundamental motivation, but from an aim to discover the element of the 'unique' or 'characteristic' in individuals' behavior. In psychological parlance, we are interested in the discovery of the most highly generalized trait of an individual which seems to be expressed in his written productions. In discussions of composition, this element of the characteristic may be spoken of as individuality. It is closely connected with



style, though the two terms are not synonymous. Style has usually been conceived in vague terms as representing some subtle, indefinable quality which not only expresses the characteristic element of the personality (that is, makes the writing of one individual different from that of another), but also adds a kind of flavor, charm, or piquancy to the writing; in other words, it is probably individuality which has undergone training in expression. The aim of the present investigators has been to define the meaning of individuality more exactly, so that the concept can be used as a basis of investigation. In this process, it will be found necessary to dissociate it experimentally (as one element) from the literary or 'training' aspects of style which we have just mentioned; though in actual practice, of course, the two are inseparably united. The following definition indicates the orientation of the following experiments. *Individuality in writing is that aspect or quality of writing which is the most reliable means of recognizing a given individual's work and of distinguishing it, in the absence of other identifying features, from the work of another.* It is based (at least in our present hypothesis) upon tendencies or traits characteristic of the individual which show themselves in his writing.

The experimental meaning of individuality is therefore not difficult to state. The situation which it presupposes is that of reading themes arranged in haphazard order and with no identifying marks or names attached, and then trying to pick out the themes which were written by a particular individual. In order to make such identifications one proceeds from a theme or themes which he knows to belong to a particular individual, and attempts to find in the mixed array of themes before him one which seems to reveal the same fundamental attitudes or traits, or a similar manner of expression. The reader thus tries to formulate certain characteristics which he considers to be exhibited throughout the themes of the individual in question. These characteristics he regards as 'hypotheses' of the fundamental disposition or personality of the writer. If, in the long run, such formulations of characteristics do not enable him with fair accuracy to pick out the themes for the particular writer, they are regarded as false hypotheses and are discarded. If they do enable him to identify the themes correctly, they are regarded, at least partially and tentatively, as true hypotheses, and are held to represent traits or patterns of traits which are dominant in the individual so far as his effort toward written self-expression is concerned.



## III

## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION: A PRELIMINARY EXPERIMENT

In a preliminary study there were employed two sets of short freshmen themes, three in each set, written by ten students selected at random. The three themes of each set were written in a single class period of fifty minutes, on standard-sized sheets of paper, with similar printed instructions given to each student. One set was written in October and the other in January. Typewritten copies of the themes were made with the titles and names of writers omitted, and these copies were used for the matching. For the purpose of a later checking of the matching the themes of a particular student were given a number; and a key was made which the investigators did not see or consult until after the matchings were made. The three subjects upon which the students wrote in October were as follows:

(a) There was assigned a task in *imaginative* writing, called for by the following instructions:

Write a "theme" or a short article beginning as follows: "Sometimes I have wondered what would happen if a classroom chair could talk."

(b) There was assigned a *descriptive* editorial (instructions as follows):

Assume that tomorrow is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the Syracuse University library, the gift of Andrew Carnegie to the University. Write an article for any newspaper describing the appearance of the building and then telling of the service it renders the University as a whole.

(c) Finally a discursive essay, requiring abstract thinking, was called for under these instructions:

The following statement was made by a visiting lecturer; comment on it any way you like, agreeing or disagreeing or adding to it:

"While no one is more opposed than I to war, or more desirous of seeing all wars cease, yet I would like to pay this tribute to war, that it has brought out a certain quality in men that no other force has produced. I refer to that quality which we term 'gallantry.' Even though it is often no more than gesture, the situation has always been

bettered by its appearance. Gallantry on the field of battle! Gallantry toward a foe! When there are no longer any wars I wonder whether gallantry may not also disappear, for I do not believe that any of the conflicts of peace are likely to produce it."

For the three themes written in January closely similar subjects, exemplifying the same three types of writing were assigned, as follows:<sup>2</sup>

(a) Imaginative

You are called to the telephone at "The Greek's." A strange voice (feminine for men; male for women) said, "Hello, hello! Just a moment. Don't go away," and silence followed that lasted ten minutes. Tell what you thought and did. Be as imaginative or as dramatic as you like.

(b) Descriptive

Describe the scene in a drug store near the campus at a busy moment, (a drug store in the home town will do if it has a soda fountain) giving not only a realistic glimpse of the appearance and equipment of the place, but some account of the purchases and conversation of customers.

(c) Discursive

The following statement was made by a campus orator yesterday; comment on it any way you like, agreeing or disagreeing, or adding to it:

"It is true that fraternities offer the comradeships of club life to boys who might otherwise be lonely; and give them also some training in responsibility as property-holders. But the greatest danger to the freshman who joins one is that he will surrender his personality and abandon his own individual objectives and ideals and allow himself to be standardized."

The method first employed was as follows. Using the October themes alone, and keeping the a's and the b's separate, the ten 'a' themes (of the ten students selected) were arranged in chance

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<sup>2</sup> All the themes used in both the preliminary and the main experiment were taken from a complete set for the freshmen class which had been assigned under the direction of Dr. Burges Johnson for use in another study. This set includes also themes upon comparable subjects written in May by the same students.



order and read in parallel fashion with the 'b' themes for the same ten students, the ten 'b' themes also being arranged in chance order. The task of the investigator in reading the themes was to attempt to match each 'b' theme with the particular 'a' theme which had been written by the same student. The likelihood that any particular matching would be correct upon the basis of chance, was, therefore, one in ten. Following this attempt at matching, the key, showing the correct pairing of the themes, was consulted and the score (the number of matchings correctly made) was noted. A correct re-arrangement of the themes was then made by reference to the key, so that the investigator had before him, side by side in ten pairs, the 'a' theme and the corresponding 'b' theme written by each student. In making the matchings up to this point, the investigator had made note of any characteristics (as, for example, terseness, desire to be impressive, 'painstakingness,' etc.) which he thought had been exhibited in each theme of each pair, and which had served him as criteria for the selection of the 'b's' to go with the corresponding 'a's.' When the first matchings were corrected and the investigator had before him the 'a' and 'b' themes correctly paired for each student, he was able to revise his statement of characteristics common to the two themes, or else to discover different characteristics which he had not before suspected. With this revision of the hypothesis of individual characteristics he then proceeded in an attempt to match with these ten pairs, comprising the 'a's' and 'b's,' on the one hand, the proper 'c' themes for the same ten students on the other, the 'c's' also being given to the investigator in haphazard order. After recording the score indicating his success in these matchings, he once more revised his statement of the student's characteristics by examining the themes (a's, b's, and c's) when they were properly paired according to the key. This entire procedure was repeated in dealing with the themes of the second, or January, series. Finally an attempt was made to match the three themes of the October series as a whole for each student with the proper set of three themes comprising the January series for the particular student. At this point the investigator made a final recasting of the traits judged to be characteristic of the student's writing. This entire process of matching and describing characteristics was repeated by a second investigator.

It will be seen that there were five matchings to be made in the case of each individual, as follows: 'a' with 'b' of series I,

'a' and 'b' with 'c' of series I; 'a' with 'b' of series II, 'a' and 'b' with 'c' of series II; 'a,' 'b,' and 'c' of series I with 'a,' 'b,' and 'c' of series II. In the case of any one student the proportion of matchings which might be expected to be correct by chance was one out of ten, since each student's themes were compared with those of nine other students. Since ten students were employed, with five matchings for each student, there were fifty matchings to be made in all. Hence, out of these fifty, we should expect ten per cent, or five matchings to be correct by chance. The scores representing the success of the investigators in matching were far above this minimum. One of the two investigators had a total of 50 per cent correct matchings, and the other a total of about 40 per cent. The results of this preliminary investigation, therefore, suggest that personal characteristics can be recognized in the writing of college students with a frequency sufficiently above chance to prove their validity.

#### IV

##### METHOD OF INVESTIGATION: MAIN EXPERIMENT

It was apparent from the preliminary study that, while the two investigators did not differ markedly in their general ability to detect individual characteristics and to match the themes correctly, the students whose themes they read varied considerably in the degree in which their work could be identified. There were some whose writings were not correctly identified by either investigator in any of the five matchings; there were others whose themes were identified correctly in almost all of the matchings by both investigators. The remainder ranged between these two extremes. This experimental finding has two important implications. First, individuals probably differ either in the degree in which they possess traits which distinguish them from other individuals, or in the degree in which they express such traits in writing. Second, the experimental work of matching and the score indicating the degree of success suggest the possibility of an *index of identification* derived from the average success of the investigators. Such an index will give us, for each student, a convenient measure of the degree in which that student's themes can be identified. If we can suppose that the conditions affecting self-expression under which the themes were written were fairly uniform for all students, this index of identification will measure, at least roughly, the degree in which a recognizable individuality is normally manifested in the student's writing.



The method followed in the main experiment was in general the same as that of the preliminary investigation. The conditions under which the themes were written, and the manner in which the material was typewritten and prepared for matching were the same. There were certain differences of method, however, which will now be described. The number of individuals whose themes were used in the main experiment was 70. Thirty-one were men, and thirty-nine women; and most of these were freshmen. They were taken from the "B" or average group in freshman English, as determined by the average of the two English ability tests regularly given to freshmen.<sup>3</sup> The reason for the selection of these students from the average group was because it was only in this group that the three needed series of themes could be obtained throughout the year. This limitation, though unavoidable, had the effect of decreasing the range of students with respect to ability, and may have lowered some of the correlations which were obtained, a point which should be borne in mind in considering the results.

In order to study the effects of certain methods of teaching upon the development of individuality in writing, the 70 students whose themes were read were selected as follows: 20 from an experimental group under Dr. Johnson's direction, conducted through informal criticism by students and teachers within the class, 24 from another experimental group following a more formalized method of instruction using literary models, and 26 from a control group in which the usual college teaching methods were employed. The students whose themes were used were taken at random from these experimental sections, and the students of the sections themselves were a representative sample equal in range of intelligence (according to the entrance intelligence examination) and in other respects with freshmen in general.

In addition to the two series of themes, written in October and January, respectively, there was added a series of three themes written in May. These three May themes duplicated the types of subjects used in the preliminary investigation. The instructions for the *imaginative* theme were:

Imagine yourself in a railroad station or bus terminal at a time when college students are arriving back in the college town after a vacation at home. It is raining hard in the street outside. Describe the scene.

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<sup>3</sup> These tests were the Tressler *Minimum Essentials Test* and the *Inglish Test of English Vocabulary*.

The instructions for the *descriptive* theme were:

The stone bench under the trees in front of the Hall of Languages has known many generations of students. Lovers have whispered there; seniors have faced life's problems; freshmen have hesitated there before visiting the dean. Write about one or many of the incidents it has seen.

The instructions for the *discursive* theme were:

The following statement was made by a visiting lecturer; comment on it any way you like, agreeing or disagreeing or adding to it:

"Crime among children of high school and grammar school age, and juvenile delinquency in general, may be due in some measure to the home background, and in part to a lack of discipline or control in the schools or a lack of religious training. But all of these taken together do not do as much harm as the moving picture theatre when these children are permitted to attend it indiscriminately and without restraint."

Since the numbering of these nine themes which will be employed in the following discussion is different from that followed in the preliminary investigation, a complete table of the titles, theme-types, and numbers is given below.

TABLE I  
TOPICS OF THEME ASSIGNMENTS

	(a) <i>Descriptive</i>	(b) <i>Imaginative</i>	(c) <i>Discursive</i>
I. October	(Ia) Report of the celebration of the founding of Syracuse University Library	(Ib) Meditations of a classroom chair	(Ic) Gallantry in war
II. January	(IIa) Description of a college drug-store	(IIb) A mysterious telephone conversation	(IIc) The loss of individuality in fraternity life
III. May	(IIIa) Description of a railroad station at train-time	(IIIb) Meditations of a stone bench	(IIIc) Relation of the moving-pictures to juvenile delinquency

Other changes in method were as follows. Instead of reading the themes in a double series of ten, five pairs were used in order to decrease fatigue and consequent variation in the sensitivity of the readers. Instead of reading the October, January, and May



themes separately and then putting the three series together, the themes were read, without regard to such grouping, by trying to match one more theme each time to the themes already in hand, the matchings of which had been corrected and analyzed. This procedure continued throughout the reading of all three sets of themes (October, January, and May). With each new matching and correction, there was added one more theme (as evidence for, or as a means of refining, the statement of the individual's characteristics), until the final or eighth matching was completed.

Owing to the possible effects of practice in matching, it was necessary to work out a special order in which the themes were to be read. If, for example, all the themes of student A were read and matched near the beginning of the experiment, and all of the themes of student B near the end, it is obvious that B's themes would have the benefit of practice in trying to detect individuality, and hence B might receive a higher index through this fact, rather than because his writing justified it in comparison with that of A. Similarly, if all of the themes of the October series were matched before any of those of the May series, we might expect a higher proportion of correct identifications in the latter than in the former from the increased practice of the matching alone, apart from any increase which may have occurred in the expression of individuality by the writers. In order to remove these sources of error, a program for matching was devised in which each student's themes were fairly equally distributed throughout the experiment, as well as the themes of the experimental and control groups, and of the three periods (October, January, and May). This will be explained more fully later.

A second possible source of error lay in the manner of grouping the students' themes. Our preliminary tests made it clear, for example, that the themes of one student (A) are often more readily confused (owing to similarity) with the themes of another student (B) than with those of a third student (C). Hence if all of a student's themes are used for matching with the themes of only four other particular students, and if by chance these students resemble him unusually closely, it will be relatively difficult to identify his themes correctly throughout the experiment; and his identification index will be misleadingly low. On the other hand, if his associates are unusually dissimilar from him, his identification score will probably be fortuitously increased. The ideal procedure, of course, would be to secure, for each matching made for

each student, associates of a 'representative' or 'average' similarity to him, so that the errors arising from this source would be minimized. Since the attempt to do this deliberately might involve an error of subjective judgment, and since it seemed to be otherwise impracticable, it was thought desirable to try to approximate it by an arrangement based upon chance. If the themes of an individual are compared with those of the same four students throughout, those four associates afford as close an approximation of a representation of the entire seventy students as is possible to obtain with the method employed. If, on the other hand, a theme of a student is compared with the themes of four individuals who are a different four in each of the eight groups in which the matchings of that student's themes occur, then the potential number of other individuals from which these four associates are always drawn is four times eight, or thirty-two. Thus the chances of any theme being compared with a representative sampling of the entire group is much greater if we employ the latter technique. The latter group of potential associates, being eight times as large as the former, is eight times more apt to be a representative, unselected group. For this reason the groupings of five pairs of themes to be matched were so arranged that, in practically every case, an individual is compared with associates different from those with whom he is compared in other groupings.

In order to accomplish the equalization of conditions described above, the program was so arranged that a part of each student's themes were matched near the beginning of the experiment and a part toward the end. The distribution of series I, II, and III (October, January, and May themes), furthermore, was so arranged that samples of each series would be handled at each stage of the experiment. Not only was each series equalized, but also the three themes of each series; so that some of the a's, for example, came near the beginning of the program and some towards the end, and similarly for the b's and c's. The reason for this latter precaution was that ease of identification of imaginative pieces of writing might be different from that of descriptive or discursive writing, or either of the two latter might differ in ease of identification from the other. The program further provided for equalizing the distribution of the three experimental teaching sections from which the students were selected.

In order to simplify the making of a program for matching based upon these complex requirements, the 70 students were sepa-



rated into two equal groups having different orders of matching. The order in which the themes for the first group were matched was as follows:

IIc, IIb, IIIc, Ia, IIIa, Ib, IIIb, Ic, IIa

For the second group the order of matching was:

Ia, IIIa, Ic, IIIb, Ib, IIc, IIa, IIIc, IIb

As may be seen from the above arrangement, it was possible to match 35 of the IIb themes (first program) near the beginning of the matchings, and the other 35 of the IIb themes (second program) at the end. In similar fashion, the program allowed for the equalization of each of the series (I, II, III), and for each of the theme-types (a, b, c). The division of the 70 students into two groups of 35 each also facilitated their distribution with respect to equalizing the difficulty of matching with particular associates. Since each matching was to be done on the basis of five pairs of themes, the attempt was made to have represented each of the three experimental teaching sections in each of these sets of five pairs. After IIc and IIb (first program) had been matched and corrected for 35 students, the whole group of themes of these 35 was rearranged so that the themes of no student were to be compared with any of the other four pairs with which they had been compared in the first matching. This method was followed throughout the investigation, following a program of the successive arrangements devised by numbers for that purpose. After having matched and corrected the IIc and IIb themes for 35 students (first program), the investigators turned to the Ia and IIIa themes for the other 35 students (second program). After these were matched and their matching corrected, they went back and attempted to put with the correctly joined IIc and IIb which they had for each student, the proper IIIc theme. They then returned to the other group and matched the correct pairs of Ia and IIIa themes with the Ic themes for that group. And so on until all were matched.

While each matching was being made, the investigators took notes of traits or characteristics which seemed to be revealed in the writing, and upon the basis of which they had made their matching. After reference to the key, and before matching another theme to those already in hand, it often became necessary to revise the original notes or to make new ones in order to formulate a characteristic to be sought in the next theme to be matched.

Some readers may object, as a possible criticism of our method,

to the limited number of investigators who matched the themes. It is, of course, admitted that if a large number of investigators had been available, instead of two, the identification indices would be statistically more significant. Nevertheless the objection stated is probably not a fatal one. We are dealing here with judgments made under conditions very different from those in the usual psychological experiment, such, for example, as an experiment dealing with sensory threshold. In such an experiment there is, as a rule, no objective check on the statement of the subject. We must rely upon his judgment from his inner experience alone. In such a situation, therefore, many subjects should be used, and many observations should be made by each subject. In the present instance, however, there is an immediate check upon the investigator's interpretation of the individuality of the student whose theme he is reading, since he can later ascertain definitely whether the judgment based upon such hypothesized individuality is correct or false. If the identification index is substantially above chance, we can feel assured that the judgment of the investigator is not based wholly upon subjective factors within himself, but in some degree at least upon the materials before him in the themes. It is true that the descriptive terms in which he formulates the student's characteristics might be differently stated by other investigators who might also make the matchings correctly. Nevertheless, those descriptive terms and their meaning for the investigator probably have some constant relationship to the individuality of the student; otherwise identification above chance would not be expected. The only alternative explanation, in the latter instance, would be the possibility that the real ground of judgment by which similarity of the themes is noted is unconscious, and that the descriptive terms put down by the investigator as the alleged basis of his matching are merely rationalizations. Such an interpretation, however, would be reduced in its significance should it be found that different investigators agree in the descriptive statements they employ. And it was often found that the formulations given by the two investigators, where the matchings were correct, were similar.<sup>1</sup>

Before turning to a discussion of the results, a statement may be made concerning the questions for which answers are to be sought in this investigation. *First:* It will be of interest to note the extent to which identification is possible, and the range and distribution of individual differences among students with respect

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<sup>1</sup> For a statement of the qualifications of the investigators see Appendix, p. 82.



to the possibility of identifying their themes. Is individuality in writing an attribute which may be appreciated by the teacher with sufficient clarity to enable him to know the student better and to aid him in the development of its expression? *Second*: Do different readers identify the same themes correctly? If not, what is the extent of difference in their identifications? *Third*: What relationship, if any, exists between the identification index and other characteristics of the students or of their writing, such, for example, as freedom from errors? *Fourth*: Is there any relationship between a student's identification index and his improvement in writing over the course of the year as judged by instructors' grades on the themes concerned? *Fifth*: Is there a relationship between length of time during which the student has been trained in writing and his identification index? *Sixth*: Is there a difference in identifiability of the themes of the different experimental training sections? *Seventh*: Is there any relationship between identification index and degree of intelligence? *Eighth*: Aside from these quantitative relationships, it will be interesting to examine cases of the writing of particular students in greater detail in order to show how an impression of their individual characteristics (at least so far as these are expressed in writing) can be drawn from the process of matching. *Ninth*: An attempt will be made to discover whether a qualitative relationship exists between the typical errors of a student and his characteristics of personality as revealed by case studies of his writings.

## V

### RESULTS

#### A. *The Identifiability of Students' Themes*

Since each student's themes were matched in sets of five pairs belonging to five different students, if we take any theme at random, there is one chance in five that it will be correctly matched by mere chance. This statement, of course, is true only if the theme be taken at random from a large number of possible themes. Let us suppose that the entire experiment comprised only five pairs of themes to be matched. In this case it is clear that, while the first theme to be matched would have a one in five probability of being correct by chance, the probabilities of the later themes matched being correct would not be one in five, but would be greater or less according to the accuracy of the matching of the preceding themes. If a large number of sets of five, however, are

taken, we may expect these differences to cancel one another, since the degree of difficulty, and hence the degree of accuracy, of matching in the early as compared with the later portions of the sets may be expected to follow a chance arrangement. In other words, there is an equal chance for each single theme, if taken at random, to have the same opportunity with every other theme to be correctly matched. And since five pairs were used in the matchings, it will follow that any theme taken at random will have one chance in five of correct matching. Inasmuch as this is true of single themes, it will also be true of the total number of themes belonging to each student. For we should expect that each student, so far as purely chance factors are concerned, would have an equal chance with every other student (conditions of arrangement of the program having been equalized) to have an identification index of a given size. Since there were eight matchings to be made for each student, and each theme matched has a one in five chance of being correct by chance, we should expect that the average number of correct matches for each student would be  $1/5$  of 8, or 1.6.<sup>1</sup> Let us compare with this chance expectation the actual identification indices obtained, remembering that the identification index is the

<sup>1</sup> [The writers are indebted to the Editor, Professor R. S. Woodworth, for the suggestion that a more complete mathematical explanation be made at this point, and for the addition of the following note which he himself prepared.]

In case the reader remains in doubt as to these probabilities, the following more laborious restatement may be of service.

1. To determine the chance of matching the two themes of a certain author, when two sets of themes by the same five authors are given: First determine the whole number of ways of pairing the themes of the two sets. Imagine the themes of the first set to be placed on the table in a fixed order, and those of the second set to be laid out in a parallel row and to be shifted into all possible permutations of five things taken five at a time, which = factorial 5 =  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 = 120$ . This is the total number of ways in which the two sets can be paired off, and all these ways are equally likely by pure chance. Next we ask in how many of these ways a designated (correct) pair will occur. One pair being fixed the number of arrangements of the remaining four pairs is factorial 4 = 24. Therefore any designated pair will occur in  $24/120 = 1/5$  of the possible arrangements, and  $1/5$  is the probability that any pair will be correctly matched by pure chance.

2. Knowing that the chances of any single match are  $1/5$ , we next ask how many of the 8 matches for an individual author will be correct by chance, on the average. Since each match in this case would be independent of all others, the question is simply: Given that 1 match out of 5 is correct by chance, how many on the average will be correct out of 8? The answer is  $1/5$  of 8 = 1.6.

3. We can go on to determine the whole chance distribution of correct matches. The chance of getting all 8 matches correct for a given individual would be  $(1/5)^8$  or practically zero. The chance for each number of correct matches can be obtained from the expansion of

$$(p + q)^8, \text{ where } p = 1/5 \text{ and } q = 4/5.$$

Thus are obtained the following chance frequencies, which are to be compared with the actual frequencies of correct matches as given for each investigator in Table II, pp. 20, 21. (Footnote continued at the bottom of page 19).



total of the correct matchings for a given student out of eight possible matchings. Table II presents the indices for each student according to the two investigators (separately and averaged), together with the average identification index of each investigator, and the final average of the two. Other data used elsewhere in this study (grades and intelligence test scores) are included in the table.

In view of these results (on the average four out of eight possible matchings being made correctly), it appears possible to identify the themes of a student, read and compared under the conditions of this experiment, with an accuracy two and one-half times greater than chance. Whatever may be the basis of this ability to identify a student's writing, there is evidently *some* factor present which is sufficiently general and consistent to be made the basis of a partially successful identification. In view of the fact that the characteristics recognized by the two investigators in identifying the themes probably differed considerably, their approximately equal ability to identify the themes is interesting. It may be noted that in the preliminary series still another investigator obtained an index of about the same size.

### B. Interpretation of the Identification Index:

#### *On What Bases were the Themes Identified?*

That results even as definite as these could be obtained in so intangible a task as trying to identify the authorship of writing, raises a question as to the basis upon which the investigators were

No. correct matches	Probability	Chance	Actual frequency for investigator	
			L.	W.
8	—	0	1	1
7	.0001	0	6	5
6	.001	0	6	10
5	.01	1	11	12
4	.04	3	14	18
3	.15	10	18	12
2	.29	20	9	8
1	.34	24	4	2
0	.17	12	1	2
	—	—	—	—
	1.00	70	70	70

For each investigator the distribution of actual matches is altogether different from the chance distribution and much better than chance.

TABLE II  
IDENTIFICATION INDICES, GRADES ON THEMES, AND INTELLIGENCE TEST SCORES,  
FOR THE SEVENTY STUDENTS

<i>Name</i>	<i>I. I. (L)</i>	<i>I. I. (W)</i>	<i>I. I. (Av.)</i>	<i>Av. T-Score on Themes</i>	<i>Intell. Percentile</i>
<i>Section J</i>					
B Be	3	5	4.0	44.2	66.0
B Sc	3	4	3.5	55.6	81.0
C Al	2	7	4.5	49.1	10.0
E Ge	6	3	4.5	54.2	40.0
E As	6	5	5.5	51.9	77.0
F Be	6	0	3.0	50.6	96.7
G Ba	7	7	7.0	41.4	77.0
G Tr	5	2	3.5	55.1	98.5
I Sc	7	6	6.5	53.2	56.0
J El	3	3	3.0	48.5	61.0
K Bo	4	6	5.0	51.5	58.0
M Ch	6	3	4.5	54.2	36.0
M Hu	1	1	1.0	56.5	55.0
M Ro	4	6	5.0	50.7	68.0
M So	5	7	6.0	44.3	65.0
S Ho	2	3	2.5	58.7	79.0
T Ri	7	6	6.5	55.2	91.0
W Or	1	4	2.5	52.5	47.0
W Ha	4	4	4.0	55.7	99.9
W Le	3	5	4.0	52.0	90.7
<i>Section C</i>					
A Ri	5	5	5.0	60.4	77.0
A Or	2	4	3.0	55.7	57.0
C Co	3	5	4.0	48.6	80.0
D Jo	3	4	3.5	60.1	58.0
E Ta	0	4	2.0	53.0	39.0
G Go	5	6	5.5	52.4	66.0
H Do	3	3	3.0	58.0	95.5
H Je	4	4	4.0	56.2	95.3
H To	6	2	4.0	57.9	—
H Ze	5	4	4.5	52.2	74.0
J Co	5	8	6.5	44.9	59.0
J Fo	4	6	5.0	49.8	55.0
J La	3	5	4.0	53.1	54.0
K Fe	2	0	1.0	55.6	62.0
K Ma	5	2	3.5	59.2	76.0
M Gw	6	3	4.5	48.9	59.0
M Jo	5	3	4.0	50.6	38.0
M Sa	5	4	4.5	47.1	68.0
M Tr	4	3	3.5	46.8	68.0
M Mc	2	6	4.0	53.2	84.0
R Br	4	5	4.5	45.4	57.0
V Ba	3	2	2.5	48.6	62.0
V Me	7	6	6.5	50.3	52.0
W Sp	3	5	4.0	41.6	29.0
<i>Section K</i>					
B Co	2	4	3.0	48.8	16.0
B St	1	3	2.0	50.9	41.0



TABLE II—(Continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>I. I. (L.)</i>	<i>I. I. (W)</i>	<i>I. I. (Av.)</i>	<i>Av. T-Score on Themes</i>	<i>Intell. Percentile</i>
C Ta	1	3	2.0	49.1	35.0
D Mo	4	6	5.0	46.6	58.0
D Wi	5	5	5.0	56.8	55.0
E Ki	2	1	1.5	42.1	15.0
G Ca	3	4	3.5	46.9	14.0
G Ce	3	4	3.5	48.2	53.0
G Cr	4	2	3.0	48.8	74.0
H Co	4	4	4.0	50.9	49.0
J Co	3	4	3.5	52.7	37.0
J Ta	3	5	4.0	55.4	53.0
J Th	4	2	3.0	43.8	93.5
K Co	4	2	3.0	46.4	28.0
L Ro	2	2	2.0	39.0	—
M Co	4	4	4.0	44.3	74.0
M Ko	7	7	7.0	43.9	42.0
R Fo	8	5	6.5	45.7	10.0
R Or	7	6	6.5	48.5	79.0
R Je	3	3	3.0	55.5	7.6
R Sm	4	7	5.5	42.3	82.0
R We	3	5	4.0	41.7	49.0
S Co	2	4	3.0	51.2	51.0
S Te	3	4	3.5	51.2	79.0
T Te	5	3	4.0	54.3	41.0
V Va	3	4	3.5	48.1	43.0
Average	3.9	4.1	4.0		

able to make their identifications. The process of comparing and matching was psychologically complex. The experimental attitude which the investigators adopted was to ignore, so far as possible, characteristic mechanical details, such as peculiarities of punctuation, spelling, or the stereotyped use of certain phrases, and to look only for general characteristics, such as interest and content on the one hand, or manner of expression upon the other. Reference has already been made to the fact that charts were used to enter for each matching operation the characteristics noted in the themes already examined and correctly arranged, characteristics, that is, on the basis of which the next theme was to be matched. An inspection of these charts shows a great variety of observations. In spite of the instructions, mechanical details were sometimes noted in the charts, although these were comparatively rare. In several cases, for example, dashes were employed by one investigator as a means of identification. In another instance the habitual abbreviation of "and" was employed. It is possible, of course, that such details may have been recognized in an unconscious

manner to a greater extent than the charts show. One important evidence, however, that there could not have been the primary basis of the identification with both investigators is to be found in the fact that, while the *average* identification indices of the two investigators were about equal, the indices which they had for the 70 students separately did not correlate to a significant degree. If mechanical details had been the basis of the identification in both cases, this correlation would probably have been higher, since such details would probably have been fairly obvious to both readers.

Many of the entries in the charts refer to personality characteristics or traits, such, for example, as *inferiority feeling, collegiate, feminine, dignified, meek, ascendant, timid, sense of humor, happy, sarcastic, cynical, energetic, optimistic, conscientious, idealistic, enthusiastic, moral tone, sentimental, self-satisfied, careless, inhibited*. In many of these entries the investigator was probably not making a distinction between a characteristic of the writing as such and a possible characteristic of the individual. While an attempt was made to imagine the individual, there was, of course, no evidence presented concerning the individual other than the characteristics which the writing revealed. Many of the entries also contain reference to types of interest or aspects of content, such as: *clothes, financial difficulty, sex interest, not much to say, unusual ideas*. There were numerous evaluations of the writing, as illustrated by the following phrases: *effective, good words, finished style, rough style, feeling for atmosphere, artistic, good details, rambling, literary, not terribly interested*, etc. In some cases form of composition was a means of identification, as shown by entries like the following: *balance of sentence, emphasis upon concluding paragraphs, general organization, carries out plot, piles up examples*, etc. In a few cases a particular type of fault was taken as the basis of the matching; for example: *loose, words used inaccurately*. One of the investigators made considerable use of the method of quoting phrases which she regarded as characteristic, attempting to find a feeling in the themes to be matched similar to that conveyed by the phrase employed. Another aid in identification was the impression gained of the student's attitude toward his writing or toward the scene he was describing. Examples of such entries are: *aloof, detached, little interested, realistic, personal*.

In order to illustrate the manner in which these entries were made, the following quotations, dealing with the same student, are made from the charts of the two investigators. The student whose



entries were chosen was taken at random. The vertical divisions represent the successive matchings of the series of eight. (In the charts these entries were arranged horizontally.)

<i>L</i>	<i>W</i>
Attempt at self-elevation possibly for sake of overcoming feelings of inferiority. Ideas ineffectively expressed. Personal.	Frats wouldn't want to change ideals. Harm in change. Shallowness of thought. Would resent dictation from parents. No insight.
Brief. Personal. Little thought. Just to "get by."	Stands aloof, resting on strength of ideals. Refers to home. Have control come from home. No need to change pictures.
Few ideas. Unimpressive style. Wants to "get by." Can do better, I think.	No insight. Selfish. Commends highly perhaps because its the thing to do?
Short. Not particularly outstanding. Simple words. Use of semi-colons. Few ideas.	Nice girl. Happy.
Few ideas. Simple. Not outstanding. "Gets by."	Extremely sensitive. Sp.
Long. Rambling. Simple words. Fair style.	No periods. S. Perhaps romance. Very short S. Lack of concentration.
Effective words. Not many ideas. Mediocre style.	Brief H's.
Use of dashes. Fair style. Abrupt.	"So interesting."

This analysis of material from the charts is necessarily impressionistic. To attempt a quantitative statement of the different types of entries would probably be of little value not only because of the difficulty of knowing what an entry meant in each case, but because the psychological processes of searching for the characteristic element for matching may be only indirectly related to the items recorded. A few interesting evidences concerning the nature of this process may be mentioned. First, the infrequency of references in the charts to interests or practical meaning (content) is striking. This phenomenon may be due in part to the fact that the same task was set for all the students, hence students could not express themselves individually through any wide range by their

own choice of content. But even aside from this it appears that much more emphasis in the attempted matchings was placed upon the manner in which a student expressed himself than upon the content which was expressed. A constant effort, in other words, was made to discover what might be called the "form quality" of the writer. Second, all who have had to do with this investigation report that the precise nature of the characteristic upon the basis of which identification is made is very elusive. The words recorded in the chart are approximations only. Over and above these phrases there is usually a more *individual* quality which eludes formulation. This is because any ordinary word one might use to describe a trait represents a degree of some characteristic common to *many* individuals; whereas the quality sought in this particular experiment (difference from other individuals) is, by its very nature, characteristic only of one. There were cases where the same phrase was used to describe the writing of different students, as, for example, 'good style,' 'desire to be impressive,' 'weak conclusion,' etc., cases in which the investigator also felt a peculiar individual quality about the attribute over and above its ordinary meaning. That is to say he experienced an *individual manner* of being impressive, weak in concluding, and the like.

There is considerable evidence that such individual characteristics were both present and used in matching, even though they could not be communicated to others in precise language. This is suggested, for example, by an inspection of the results of the cumulative procedure by which the matchings were made. One investigator reported introspectively that the matchings which were made on the basis of a number of themes already correctly arranged gave a greater feeling of certainty than matchings involving only the first two or three themes of the student. In other words, the more themes one has before one to examine for the characteristic element, the more definite becomes one's feelings of what that element is. The experience of certainty does not seem to arise, however, from the large number of details presented, but from the fact that when much material is present it becomes easier accurately to pick out that which is common and essential to all. This subjective experience is supported by the fact that with both investigators there was a clear trend toward greater accuracy of matching in the later matchings (where a large number of themes were already in hand) than in the earlier. The trends for the two investigators are shown in Table III. This trend of improvement may have been due



TABLE III  
NUMBER OF CORRECT IDENTIFICATIONS (OUT OF 70 POSSIBILITIES) FOR THE  
EIGHT MATCHINGS SEPARATELY

<i>Investi- gators</i>	<i>1st match- ing</i>	<i>2nd match- ing</i>	<i>3rd match- ing</i>	<i>4th match- ing</i>	<i>5th match- ing</i>	<i>6th match- ing</i>	<i>7th match- ing</i>	<i>8th match- ing</i>
L	21	26	23	35	40	42	41	45
W	29	41	31	35	39	38	43	32
Av.	25	33.5	27	35	39.5	40	42	38.5

to some extent to the effect of practice, since the matchings involving a greater number of themes were done later than those employing a smaller. This effect, however, may have been in turn offset by the greater fatigue where so many themes were involved. If this evidence from cumulative matching is tenable, it supports the interpretation that there are generalized characteristics of individuals which express themselves in their writing, and that these can be more accurately sensed the wider the sampling of the individual's productions, just as any scientific generalization becomes more dependable the greater the number of the instances upon which it is based.

An important aspect of the process of finding identification characteristics remains yet to be mentioned. The charts show that, although there was close agreement in the characteristics cited in certain cases where the identification index was high for both investigators, on the whole the two investigators tended to pick out *different* characteristics as typical of the individuals concerned. In cases where there was a wide difference in their identification indices for a particular student, they exhibited marked lack of agreement in the characteristics recorded in the charts. The two series of identification indices for the 70 students, representing respectively the number of themes out of eight possibilities correctly identified for each student by investigators L and W, were correlated, using the Pearson product-moment formula. The coefficient was found to be  $+ .28 \pm .07$ .<sup>4</sup> Although this coefficient shows a trend toward positive correlation, it is so small as to indicate that the indentifications of the themes by the two investigators must have been based in considerable degree upon different characteristics. The fact that approximately equal degrees of accuracy, well above chance, were

<sup>4</sup> This and other measures of reliability used in this study represent the probable error.

obtained by both investigators, although their relative matchings did not correlate, suggests not only that different characteristics were often used, but that (in cases at least where one investigator was very accurate and the other very inaccurate) one of them had detected the *correct* characteristic while the other had failed. The reasons for such success or failure of the investigators in individual cases are not clearly known. They may be numerous. In certain instances, no doubt, they represent merely temporary fatigue or lapse of attention, or the results of having started with a wrong but somewhat inflexible hypothesis in the matching of a particular student's themes. On the other hand, the reasons for these differences may be more deep-seated, and perhaps characteristic of the investigator himself. A reader, for example, may have an inhibition against the recognition of a certain characteristic in the personality of others. It has been found that defect of a certain trait one's self is sometimes associated with a lack of ability to detect that trait in others.<sup>5</sup> There may also be something about the more general attitude of the investigator, that is, his entire integration of personality, which makes it easier for him to detect the common characteristic of some individuals than those of others. Differences of intelligence of the two investigators might also play a part.

But whatever the reason for these differences may be, their occurrence is a matter of interest, both for the theory of the psychology of personality, and for the personal relationship of instructors to students in the teaching of English. For they indicate that for practical purposes an estimate that one makes of the personality of an individual with whom one is dealing is likely to be a function not of the individual alone, but also of the person who makes the estimate. Our identification indices represent not merely the fundamental characteristics of the individual students, but the combination of these with the particular ability, background, and traits of the investigator himself. This consideration must be borne in mind in interpreting the results based upon our use of this index.

There are two possible interpretations of the fact that our identification indices reflect the personality of the investigator as well as of the individual studied. Some authorities would maintain that personality itself is to be found not in one isolated individual, but only in the social status, relationship, or 'social image' which 'reflects' the individual as he is seen by others. In this case one would say that the investigator who failed to match any of the themes of a student correctly failed because his conception of the individual

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<sup>5</sup> See Hollingworth, H. L., *Judging Human Character*, Chapter IV.



studied did not coincide with the identifiable social image of the latter's personality; whereas with a different investigator regarding the individual studied, that image might have emerged. This explanation seems to the present writers to be unnecessarily mystical, and unlikely to lead to a fruitful approach in personality study. Personality as a relationship of two individuals means nothing that can have any explicitly denotable basis, or can be studied in scientific fashion. It is true that there will always be present the personal tendency or bias of the investigators making the study. This tendency, however, may be treated not as fused with the personality of the individuals studied into some super-individual entity or social image, but only as a particular limitation on seeing the other individual as he really is. We can have the same faith in the objectivity of another human personality (at least in its organic foundations), as a geologist has in the objectivity of rocks and soil. The interpretation, therefore, which seems to the present writers more valuable, is that differences in our identification indices are to be taken as measuring not the social situations between the two individuals, but the differences in capacity of investigators for discovering a fundamental and general characteristic in the individual studied. The validity of this interpretation seems to be established by the fact that generalization and correct matching are possible from the observations of a single investigator. The same criteria of judgment that made it possible for him correctly to match the themes might give him a basis for predicting what the next theme of the individual would be like. Now prediction of events which occur outside the investigator's field of control, that is, of events which he in no way produces himself, is the best possible proof of the existence of a phenomenon independent of the investigator.

If, then, we regard the common characteristic as something the basis of which the subject does really possess, but which is perceived or used in matching *in different degrees* by those of different capacities to perceive, the bearing of this view upon the identification index is apparent. In this case we should regard as the proper identification index not the average of the indices obtained by the two investigators, but the higher of these two indices. Under this interpretation we regard the efforts of the investigators to discover characteristics through which to identify the themes as two attempts to find the solution of a problem; and naturally we take as our final answer that solution which is found, upon checking the accuracy of the matchings, to be associated with the greater number of correct choices. The correct index of identifiability is, in this case, the one which the most discerning investigator (that is, the one with the highest matching score for that particular subject) was able to attain.

Those who argue, on the other hand, that personality represents a combination of the individual studied and the one who perceives him will maintain that such individuality in the subject cannot be correctly gauged by one other individual alone, no matter how dis-

cerning the latter may be, but that it should be represented as an average of the 'individualities' which he manifests to different persons about him. On this view, the *individual* characteristic would not be something unique, to be discovered like the solution of a problem, and capable of being most accurately perceived only by the most gifted individuals. It would be, on the other hand, a degree of a trait common in differing degrees to *every one*. It would represent a kind of community effect, based upon an average of the degrees to which his various associates were able through their own personalities to discern it. Upon this theory the success in identifying a subject's performance would be thought of not as reflecting a discovery of what his individuality *is*, but as a kind of scoring of *how much* individuality he possesses.

According to either theory of the identification index, it would be desirable to employ as many investigators as possible, but for different reasons. Under the 'higher score' interpretation, in which we view individuality as something to be discovered by investigators most competent to perceive it, we should wish a large number of investigators merely because we would be more likely by chance to secure the most gifted observers out of a larger than out of a smaller number. Hence the highest identification index obtainable in a very large group would be the most correct index which could be obtained. Depending upon ability rather than upon average effect upon associates, this score would be obtained not by the mode of a normal distribution curve of observers, but only by the few at the upper extreme. Under 'average score' interpretation, which would make individuality in writing a function of a social situation, a large number of investigators would be desired in order to have the widest possible sampling of social situations in which the individuality could be manifested. The aim, in this case, would not be to find the maximum individuality which the subject is capable of expressing to those capable of recognizing it, but to find the average degree of individuality he actually does show to those about him in view of the differing capacities of observers to see it.

This distinction in the theory of individuality is a fundamental one. The issue raised is whether we are to take as our center of reference each individual with all the capacities, traits, and qualities peculiar to himself, and are to regard our index as the predictive value of these unique potentialities in him; or whether we are to regard him, on the other hand, as an average or cross section of the interactions between himself and others, effects which determine his social image and status in the community. The practical consequences of this issue, in determining how we set the stage for the development of individuality, are as apparent as its theoretical implications.

When the results of this investigation were computed, the writers had not yet carried their logical analysis of the identification index to the conclusion to which this issue points. Consequently they employed only the more obvious of the two interpretations. That is, they used the *average* rather than the higher of the two



indices of identification. Subsequently certain of the correlations were re-calculated using the other method, namely that of the higher of the two indices. These results will be appended in their proper place.

A question of interest arises as to the manner in which the identification indices of the entire group of 70 students are distributed. If we assume that these indices (or their average) are correct measures of the expression of individuality in writing, we may ask whether individuality, like other measurable traits and biometric measurements, is distributed according to the curve of normal probability. If individuality is a kind of trait to be rated by measurements along a simple continuum, we should naturally expect it to follow such a form of distribution. If, on the other hand, it is something unique in every individual, that is, if we think of it as qualitative rather than quantitative, then it becomes impossible to predict what the nature of its distribution will be, or, in fact, to conceive such distribution in quantitative terms at all. It is possible, however, to think merely in terms of predictability, that is, in terms of the number of times, out of a total of eight chances, in which an attempt to match or predict upon the basis of individual characteristics can be expected to succeed. Though the number of themes per individual employed in our identification indices was too small for any great reliability, we may take these indices, denoting number of successes in matching, as a rough measure not, perhaps, of the individuality itself, but of the degree of its expression in the writing of the individual concerned.

Figure 1 indicates this distribution of the average identification indices of the two investigators for the 70 students, plotted upon frequency intervals of one step each, with the total possible range of zero to eight. The height of the columns indicates the number of cases in each identification index interval. It will be seen that while the mode is near the center of the distribution, the curve is not truly that of a normal probability distribution, but is steeper and more positively accelerated. It tends to resemble a double J-curve in form. A possible explanation of curves of this type is that they show the influence of some unusual pressure toward conformity at the mode.<sup>6</sup> What this conformity-producing agency may be can only be conjectured. It may be that in the training of students in the writing of themes in high school and college an emphasis is

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<sup>6</sup> See F. H. Allport, "The J-Curve Hypothesis of Conforming Behavior," *Journal of Social Psychology*, May, 1934.

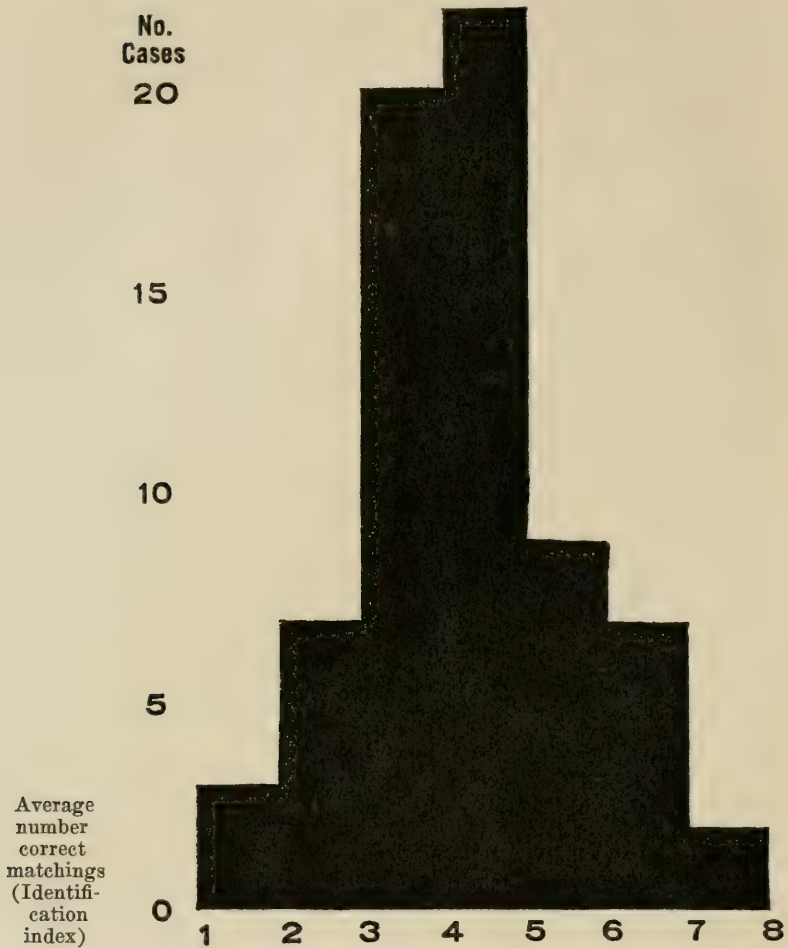


FIGURE 1

Distribution of Average Identification Indices

placed upon expressing a *moderate* degree of individuality. Showing no individuality at all may be discouraged equally with showing too much. The degree of individuality shown may be one of the many things upon which individuals tend to conform. It is also possible that the steepened distribution of identification indices is due not to genuine differences in the revealing of individuality but to some tendency of the investigators in performing the matchings.

A similar graph showing the distribution of identification indices is presented in Figure 2. This distribution, however, is based

not upon the average, but upon the *higher* of the two indices given by the two investigators in the case of each student.

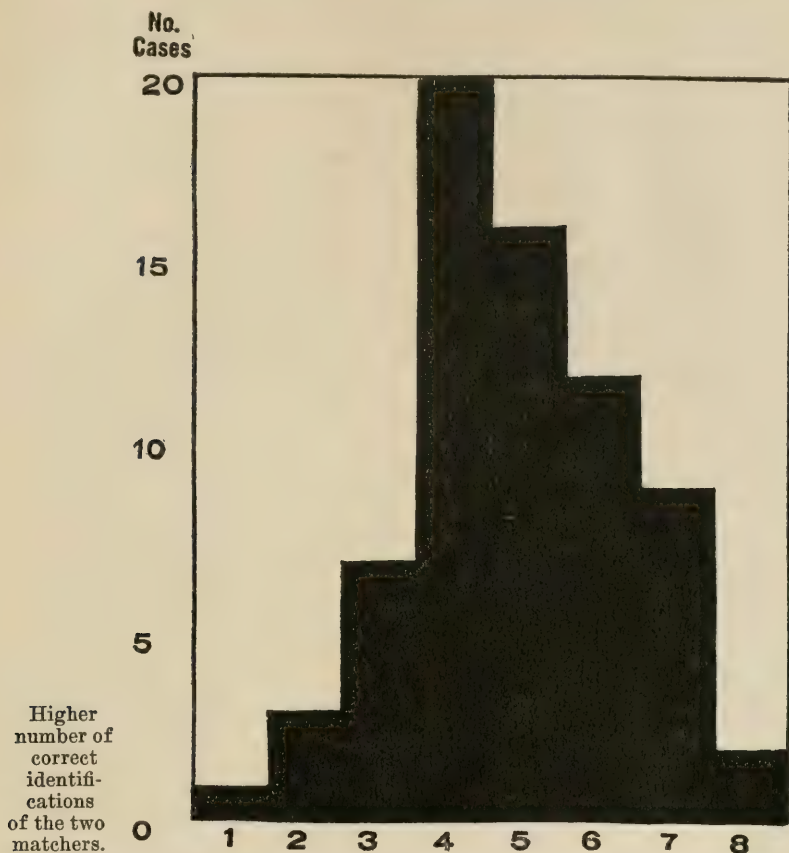


FIGURE 2  
Distribution of Identification Indices  
(Higher Index of Two Matchings)

This curve, which is somewhat more regular than that in Figure 1, appears to be a combination of two different forms, resembling a J-curve of conforming behavior upon the left side, and the usual bell-shaped curve of normal probability on the right. Too little is known about distributions of this type and the conditions underlying the expression of individuality to permit an explanation of this phenomenon. Although this distribution may be due to the conditions of matching and may represent tendencies in the investigators' reactions, it is also possible that it represents a fairly ac-



curate picture of individuality distribution among college students, or perhaps among human beings generally.

A final consideration regarding the identification indices remains to be mentioned. It must be remembered that the subjects who wrote the themes used in this study were practically unknown to the investigators. The characteristics recognized in their writing, on the basis of which other writing was to be matched, were, therefore, only *hypothetical* characteristics. They were verified only by their value as criteria of matching, and not by actual contact with the individuals themselves. In some cases they may have been their true characteristics. In other cases they may have represented only what we may call a "writing personality." Such a personality (a kind of social self) may be related to the fundamental characteristics of the individual's *entire* behavior only in some special or indirect way. A further discussion of this distinction will be given later.

C. *Relation of the Identification Index to the Teaching of English: Correlations with Other Aspects of Students' Work*

- (a) *Is the merit of a student's themes, as determined by grades, related to degree of individuality shown?*

An interesting question arises as to whether the possession of those individual characteristics which enable a theme to be identified bears any relation to the value of the student's writing as judged by the usual academic standards. Numerical grades on the basis of 100 per cent were given by three instructors to each of the nine experimental themes of each student. This grading was done independently of the present investigation. The grades of each instructor were transmuted into a McCall's T-Score, and the resulting scores averaged. The following formula was used for transmuting the grades:

If the grade was above the average of the distribution of scores:

$$\text{T-Score} = 50 - 10 \left( \frac{\text{Score} - \text{Av. of dist.}}{\text{S. D. of dist.}} \right)$$

If the grade was below the average of the distribution of scores:

$$\text{T-Score} = 50 - 10 \left( \frac{\text{Av. of dist.} - \text{Score}}{\text{S. D. of dist.}} \right)$$

This series of averages of the transmuted grades (shown in Table II) was then correlated with the series of identification indices

given by each of the investigators (Pearson product-moment method). The resulting coefficients of correlation are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN GRADE ON THEMES AND IDENTIFICATION INDEX

I. I. (L) .....	+ .027 $\pm$ .08
I. I. (W) .....	- .230 $\pm$ .07
Av. I. I. ....	- .186 $\pm$ .07

We are at once impressed by this apparent lack of connection between the individuality shown in students' themes and their value from the standpoint of "good writing." A number of cautions regarding interpretation are in order. In the first place, it must be remembered that teachers' grades in general, and particularly in so subjective a field as the grading of composition, are not highly reliable. The same theme may be given a different grade at a different time by the same instructor, and different instructors may differ widely in marking the same theme. In spite of the fact that the transmuting of the grades into the McCall T-Score corrected for differences of general standard in the instructors' grading, a certain amount of unreliability must still remain. Secondly, the identification index may be inaccurate, owing to the limited number of investigators or the small number of themes read for each student. If we assume, however, that there is sufficient reliability in the conditions of the experiment to draw some conclusion, it will appear that the written expression of individuality is not directly related to the value of writing, as that value is measured in the ordinary academic procedure.

A moment's consideration will show how this can be. The grades given by the instructors were, in the first place, based largely upon a consideration of the more specific faults exhibited or avoided in the writing. Some of these criteria were more mechanical or standardized than others; but all, it seems, were directed toward making students conform to certain uniform requirements such as clarity, coherence, or precision, or the more mechanical rules of spelling and punctuation. Naturally the conformity of students to (or their divergence from) those pedagogical and societally-imposed standards is not the most satisfactory basis upon which to recognize their unique characteristics as individuals.

Marking on the basis of conformity to certain minimum, common requirements in writing may tend to hide from the teacher that view of the student as an individual which a deeper study of his writing, or a different evaluation of it, might reveal.<sup>7</sup>

The matchings of one of our investigators were probably based to some extent upon the particular degree or manner in which the writer departed from these societal or mechanical standards of writing. W's coefficient of correlation, though not high enough to be significant, was over three times its probable error. This coefficient, being negative, suggests in the matchings of W a trend toward an increased accuracy of matching with decreasing merit (grade) of the themes, and thus supports the inference that the matching was made in part upon the prevalence or the character of the errors. Individuality would be here exhibited only as a characteristic reaction away from institutionalized standards. The coefficient of the other investigator, however, was practically zero. Our conclusion, therefore, is that there is probably little or no correlation between academic merit of writing and the degree of its recognition through the individuality of the writer, and that whatever relationship there might be in this connection is probably negative.<sup>8</sup>

If this conclusion can be sustained by later investigations, it will have considerable significance in the teaching of English composition. For it indicates either one or both of two possible conditions: (1) Instructors in their grading are not encouraging the expression of individuality through written composition; and (2) individuality as such does not necessarily go with natural ability for good writing in the academic and socially accepted sense, nor with the facility for learning good writing habits. Instructors should, therefore, realize that, in marking on the basis of the conventional requirements, they may be quite indifferent to the evidence of individuality in writing. Our present finding is significant

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<sup>7</sup> It is proposed, as a continuation of this investigation, that the themes be read by other persons competent in the field of literary evaluation for the purpose of having them rated on the basis solely of *interest*. It may be that this attribute will show a correlation with the identification index where the more mechanical aspects have failed to do so.

<sup>8</sup> The coefficient of correlation (Pearson) was also computed for the relationship between grades on themes and an identification index based not upon the average, but upon the higher matching score of the two investigators. This correlation,  $-.17 \pm .07$  was even lower than that found by using the other form of identification index. Since the I. I. based on the higher matching score is probably the more correct (see Section V B) we may feel the more justified in inferring an absence of relationship between merit (as based on grades) and identifiability.



because it shows (at least in the English sections studied in this investigation) that these two desiderata ('good' writing and 'individual' writing) are not directly related, but may vary independently. The task of the English instructor, therefore, if he wishes to encourage the development of 'creative' writers, is to pay attention to these two components separately. He must aid the student in expressing himself as an individual at the same time that he is helping him to overcome faults common to untrained writers in general.

(b) *How is improvement in writing, as tested by academic standards, related to individuality?*

Another way of approaching this problem is to take as a basis of comparison not the total average throughout the year, but the improvement from one set of experimental themes to another. We may thus obtain some notion of the relation between individuality and conventionally good writing from the standpoint of the ability of students to improve throughout the course of the year. This inquiry may give us some answer to the following questions: (1) whether students are being taught to express themselves as individuals while they are also being taught 'good' writing; and (2) whether the students who are most capable of doing individual writing are also those who are the more capable of *learning to write well* according to customary standards. An index showing the individual improvement in the May themes over the October themes was obtained by subtracting the average of the T-scores of the three October themes, for each student, from the average T-score of the May themes. This remainder (showing gain) was divided by the average T-score of the October themes in order to ascertain the percentage of improvement. An October-January improvement index was obtained by subtracting the average T-score of the three October themes from that of the three January themes, and dividing by the average October score. A January-May improvement index was calculated in similar manner by subtracting the average T-score of the January themes from the average T-score of the three May themes, and dividing the result by the average January score. These improvement indices were then correlated separately with the identification index (Pearson product-moment method). The results are shown in Table V.

Although none of these coefficients is large enough to be significant, two of those of investigator W were four times their probable

TABLE V  
CORRELATION OF IMPROVEMENT INDEX AND IDENTIFICATION INDEX

<i>Improvement Index for Series</i>	<i>I. I. (L)</i>	<i>I. I. (W)</i>	<i>I. I. (Av.)</i>
Oct.-May .....	$-.060 \pm .08$	$-.279 \pm .07$	$-.203 \pm .07$
Oct.-Jan. ....	$-.022 \pm .08$	$-.271 \pm .07$	$-.170 \pm .08$
Jan.-May .....	$-.064 \pm .08$	$-.020 \pm .08$	$-.031 \pm .08$

error; and it is significant that in every case the coefficient was negative. We have seen in Table IV a probable tendency of one investigator to employ faults of writing as one of the bases for identification, a procedure which resulted in a slightly negative correlation between identifiability and grades on the themes. Insofar as characteristic faults are one type of criteria in the identification, we should expect that when the faults become gradually reduced in number or eliminated identification would be less successful. This, of course, is what may be expected to happen over the course of a year's training; and the more fully the errors were eliminated, the fewer criteria would be present on the basis of which the identification could be made. It is significant that it is not as easy to identify an individual's writing on the basis of its deviation in the direction of excellence in writing as it is in the direction of defect.

Judging from these results, we are probably compelled to answer in the negative the question of whether instructors are basing their notion of improvement upon degree of individuality in expression, and likewise the question of whether individuals who have the clearest individuality to express are also the most likely to eliminate the ordinary faults of writing. In the degree of improvement in writing throughout the year, as in the case of the total year's average, we see no relationship in pedagogical practice between the cultivation of individual self-expression and the acquisition of habits of good writing according to common standards.

(c) *Does individuality in writing increase with  
length of classroom training?*

Apart from the problem of pedagogical standards in connection with the development of individuality, we may inquire whether students tend to show more (or less) individuality in their writing

after they have been trained for some months by the usual college methods. An answer to this question may be obtained by comparing the average identification indices of the themes written in October, January, and May, a comparison which is shown in Table VI. Since the indices of these periods are based upon the matching

TABLE VI  
AVERAGE IDENTIFICATION INDEX FOR VARIOUS DATES

		<i>Chance identification</i>
October .....	1.400	.5
January .....	1.485	.5
May .....	1.442	.6

of three themes rather than nine, they are smaller than the indices previously discussed. The index shown in Table VI is an average of the indices of the two investigators for the different periods. Owing to certain complications in the arrangement of the reading program, the chance expectancy of successful matching is not the same in all of these three periods. For the October themes it is .5, for the January themes .5, and for the May themes .6. It will be seen from the table that the success of identification in all cases is nearly three times the chance expectancy.

From these results there appears to be no change in the identifiability of themes written in the later months as compared with those written in the earlier. This finding tends to confirm our previous observation that no effective effort has been made to increase individuality in writing over the course of the year, and that such an increase in individuality does not automatically take place.

(d) *How do the different experimental sections  
compare with respect to the identifiability  
of their students' themes?*

An attempt was made to discover whether the three types of experimental section employed in the classes from which the seventy students were selected differed in the degree of individuality shown in the themes of their respective students. Unfortunately the numbers of cases available in each of these sections was too small to permit of any definite conclusions. The comparisons are given in Table VII.



TABLE VII  
AVERAGE IDENTIFICATION INDICES FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL TEACHING SECTIONS

<i>Section</i>	<i>I. I. (L)</i>	<i>I. I. (W)</i>	<i>I. I. (Av.)</i>
J .....	4.25	4.35	4.30
C .....	3.92	4.13	4.02
K .....	3.62	3.96	3.79

Section J represents the section conducted under the direction of Professor Burges Johnson. The method employed was to have the themes written specifically for reading in class, their reading being followed by informal criticism by fellow-students and teacher. In Section C the method consisted of having the students follow, as examples, the writings of certain classical authors or experts in style. The method in Section K was the ordinary procedure in classes in college English. None of the differences between these sections with respect to average identification index is equal to four times the probable error of the difference. There is to be noted, however, in all three identification indices (L's, W's, and the average) a certain constant trend. The identification index of the J section is constantly higher than that of the C section, and the index of the C section is consistently higher than that of the K section. Since no special method of selection had been employed in recruiting the students in these sections, it appears probable that the conditions affecting the writing in the J section were a little more conducive to the expression of the students' individuality than were those of other sections. It is natural to suppose that a situation in which students have a chance to deliver their contributions in person, and to impress their ideas upon their fellow-students and elicit their responses, may be superior, for this purpose, to the more formal classroom procedures. A further investigation, however, is necessary before this conclusion can be definitely established.

(e) *Does a relationship exist between intelligence and individuality as shown in themes?*

In order to answer this question the test results of Syracuse University freshmen on the *American Council Psychological Examination* were employed. The measure used was the percentile rank of each student of our group of 70 as compared with the ranks

of 1,000 Syracuse University freshmen (see Table II). The correlation of these scores with the identification index was ascertained as before by the Pearson product moment method. The results are shown in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII  
CORRELATION OF INTELLIGENCE SCORE AND IDENTIFICATION INDEX

I. I. (L) .....	+ .199 $\pm$ .07
I. I. (W) .....	+ .007 $\pm$ .08
I. I. (Av.) .....	+ .122 $\pm$ .08

It will be seen that, insofar as the test used was an adequate measure of intelligence, little or no relationship exists between the expression of individuality in themes and the mental ability of their writers.<sup>9</sup>

D. *Relationship of Identification Index to the Teaching of  
English: Analysis of Writing as an Expression  
of the Personality of the Writer*

One of the most interesting phases of this research is the analysis of the entire group of themes of particular students in order to discover, by the method of case study, the manner in which individuals' characteristics are expressed in writing. Since each case is unique, such an analysis, of course, must be qualitative rather than quantitative; and no generalizations can be made which transcend the case under consideration. The method consists wholly of the interpretation of motives, wishes, and personality trends as shown in writing. Certain cases have been selected for description, and by the use of the charts of characteristics and materials quoted from the themes, an attempt has been made to present the salient characteristics of the individuals as revealed in their writing, and to show the manner in which these characteristics influence the written expression. This method, obviously, is one which any English teacher might employ. He would need merely to assemble before him a number of themes of a particular student and read them, trying to find throughout all of them a certain common quality or characteristic which would transcend the

<sup>9</sup> The coefficient of correlation (Pearson) was computed for intelligence test scores in relation to an identification index based upon the *higher* score of the two investigators (Section V B). This coefficient also was found to be negligible ( $+.02 \pm .08$ ).

particular topic and reveal the student. A teacher, indeed, would be in a more fortunate position than the present investigators for conducting a study of this sort; for he could have before him not only the written compositions, but the student himself. It happened in a few of the case studies that the individuals described were known personally to one of the investigators, although she had made no close or systematic study of their personalities. In certain instances there appeared to this investigator a marked contrast between the individual as shown in the themes and his characteristics as shown in daily life. In one case, for example, one of the charts indicated the characteristics of a certain student's themes as aggressiveness or self-confidence. This individual, however, judged by the other investigator (who really knew him) was in reality one of the most reclusive and timid of students. It is not improbable that in certain individuals a special and fictitious 'writing personality' may have developed. The writer may try to compensate in his literary expression for certain inadequacies of his personality or his material circumstances. In other cases the relationship of writing to self-expression may be direct rather than a compensatory one. In any event, the tracing out of this connection between characteristics disclosed in writing and traits discovered through a face-to-face study of the individual may be found to be a method of considerable pedagogical interest. Through it we may gain a glimpse of those sources of motivation upon which the effort toward improvement in self-expression is based.

The following cases do not represent an unselected group. They were chosen in some cases because of the clearness of the connection between what seemed to be the student's personality, on the one hand, and his manner of writing upon the other. In other instances they were selected merely because there was something about them which was interesting or exceptional. As selected cases, they are to be considered as suggestions of the possibilities of this type of research, rather than as conclusive evidence of what such a study might disclose. These cases do not, however, represent a special selection with respect to identification index; for the indices in some of them were high, and others low. From the standpoint of the conventional standards of good writing, characteristic elements such as those described in these case studies may be considered in two ways: (1) in their bearing upon the good qualities of writing which the writer exhibits, and (2) in their bearing upon certain types of faults. For the most part, the fol-



lowing case studies illustrate the relation of characteristics of personality to virtues in writing, or show the forms which such characteristics assume in themes of different types. A subsequent section will deal with the relation of the characteristic elements to defects.

(a) *Case Studies*

1: D.W. Female, Theme No. 22 (5-5)<sup>10</sup>

This set of themes was matched on the basis of three different identification characteristics. In the first place, their writer reveals an intangible quality that can best be described, perhaps, as *a feeling for atmosphere*. The similarity she finds between the Carnegie Library and "one of the old buildings we find pictured in our Latin grammar" may be compared in a later theme with, "But the weather could not even lessen their spirits, and with more laughter and shouts, the young folks shamed the rain. Then the sun came out." The last brief sentence, "Then the sun came out," is more than a short sentence used to conclude her theme; it shows the same interest in atmosphere that she feels in another theme when she describes the night as a background for her story. She uses it for color, and finds the setting necessary to lead up to the point of her incident: "The night came, and the stars, and the moon. A bat swooped around in inquiry. The howl of a cat did not disturb him. While the hands of the clock whirled around until after twelve, the young man thought and thought." She leisurely values atmosphere although it is never forced. Occasionally the characteristic can be identified in incidental comments.

Congruent with this interest in setting is *a well-balanced sense of humor*. She appreciates a joke on herself and rather enjoys telling it, as shown in the incident of the telephone conversation. The classroom chair, if it could talk, "would reveal that I'm just a little Frosh running around like a chicken with its head cut off." Occasionally there are indications of a quieter and more subtle sense of humor. After having spent some time in the drug-store with no particular business there and for no apparent reason she observes, ". . . the trolley grinded around the corner and I left the store with a package of gum and a grin."

Indications of a subtler sense of humor are consistent with her feeling for atmosphere, but neither seems to link definitely with another interest that comes out in various themes. Even here,

<sup>10</sup> The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of correct matchings, out of eight possibilities, made by the two investigators respectively. The first number is the identification index of L, the second that of W.

however, her references are subtly humorous and without apparent conflict. In the railroad station, for example, she sees her "fellow-students" coming back to college "with bags, golf clubs, and even a suspicious-appearing wrapped bottle conspicuous." Again, a senior sits on the stone bench for hours until finally, "he jumped up rather stiffly, threw his arms toward the sky and shouted, 'I left it behind the clock in the frat!' It was his pet bottle-opener." At the drugstore, she notices, "Four or five fraternity brothers were debating which one drank the most beer the night before, and who held it the best." Her attitude toward drinking seems to be the same quiet, amused tolerance that was the basic characteristic upon which her themes were identified. With this thought in mind, the readers found even in the themes that had not been correctly matched, the outstanding characteristic that followed consistently throughout the entire set of nine themes was this *quiet, amused tolerance of social relations and situations*, and that this characteristic was definitely the real basis of the other more superficial judgments of qualities in terms of which the matchings had been made.

2: C.C. Male, Theme No. 61 (3-5)

*Naturalness and confidence* were the main hypotheses for the identification of C.C.'s themes. In discussing gallantry, his ideas on the subject were good, but his thoughts were poorly organized. This fact was also brought out in his writing on fraternities and movies. Before he has fully developed one idea, he has turned to another; but *he is never at a loss for a new idea, and he takes the change lightly*. In the same way, in his drugstore theme, he tells of wanting a "lemon coke" with Jane, but when other girls monopolize Jane and the conversation, he leaves, neither offended nor annoyed, to quench his thirst elsewhere.

His conversation is easy and natural; and even in the themes calling for less imagination, he is *unreserved and spontaneous*. He has enough insight to be able to laugh at himself (for example, when he receives a fake telephone call, or when he volunteers the information that he is aware of prepotent urges), but he never becomes humiliated. Throughout the themes his confidence in himself is shown either in a feeling of personal superiority (that he is a fraternity man, that he recognizes that moving-pictures are not the only sources of crime among children), or in *a certain consciousness that he must get ahead in this world*. In discussing gallantry, he asserts that "life is a continuous battle"; and this

same characteristic comes out later in his soliloquy of the classroom chair, where his interest lies in the "success stories" of the people who have sat there. *He expects life to be a battle*, but he thinks his confidence and his naturalness will enable him to make a very satisfactory adjustment to whatever situations arise. His confidence does not become conceit, though it might if it were not for a certain insight which, on the one hand, enables him to see himself as ridiculous, and on the other, allows him to act and express his feelings naturally.

3: F.A. Female, Theme No. 28 (6-5)

One investigator found no definite outstanding characteristic until after the first five themes had been matched. The other was misled by the style of the description of the railroad station. Here the writing was characterized either by fragmentary sentences or by short direct statements. "The change from a dime must be had. A matter of life and death. The soda fountain is mobbed. The clerks looked harrassed." Most misleading of all was the final sentence: "Pools of water lay around everywhere, and the odor of wet things still remains." It was impossible to name exactly the characteristic shown in this sentence and sought for in later themes. When the description of the stone bench was read, there was a trace of the same "feeling" present. "Oh, the peace and quiet relief the hard stone seat gave to Jane. She laid her hands on the rough surface to help her feel reality and looked up into the branches of the whispering green leaves." Most of the descriptions, of course, depended upon visual or auditory sensations, although some instances as may be seen above involved olfactory and tactual impressions. The choice of sensory mode does not, however, express the "feeling" that was experienced by the investigator and that was correctly identified again in the description of the drugstore. In this instance, the identifying characteristic could not be named because it was even more intangible than in the previous incident. In view of the fact that five correct matchings were made for the entire set of themes, and that this particular "feeling" was found in only three, it seemed that there must be some more characteristic element which had been noted unconsciously by the reader in making the judgments.

Upon re-reading the themes for this student the predominating characteristics that seemed to color all the samples were *a naturalness of attitude, a confident adjustment in her social relationships,*



*and an independence of action.* This is best shown in the theme dealing with the mysterious telephone call, in which she says: "I slammed down the receiver and walked away. To this day I don't know who it could have been or what he wanted. Probably some smart Alec who was playing a practical joke. I like to think that it might have been an exciting murder mystery. Things like that never happen to me." She has no fears concerning the importance of the telephone call, she has no worries that she might regret her indifference later, she has no thought of offending anyone by not waiting, she is sufficient unto herself. In the last two of the sentences quoted there is present the same characteristic that is brought out in the three themes mentioned previously, namely, the descriptions of the railroad station, the drugstore, and the stone bench: "I like to think that it might have been an exciting murder mystery. Things like that never happen to me."

4: B.S. Male, Theme No. 30 (3-4)

*B.S. wants to make a good impression.* He seriously *attempts to do well the task that is assigned him.* In descriptive themes, he is factual and detailed. In discursive writing, he intends to be comprehensive in his arguments. In imaginative compositions, he is both *factual and comprehensive.* In his effort to complete his task creditably he does not always succeed in being original. Sometimes this is revealed in phrases he has heard or read, phrases that have become stock expressions; for example, "the service of the library is invaluable," "These trying times," "fancied wrongs," "poor and needy," and "cherished a desire." In other instances, this dependence upon others for ideas and the expression of ideas is illustrated in the introduction of anecdotes. He depends upon these stories to entertain the reader where he cannot. Often the anecdote has nothing to do with the particular theme in which he is using it, but he wishes to please the reader, to create a good impression. In the composition on the stone bench, his lack of originality appears in the conventional ending: "He smiled weakly and said, 'Bye, kid, I'll meet you at the bench.' His head sank to the pillow and he died. The nurse came and led me away." Here the triteness of his treatment and expressions does not bother him. He is concerned rather with the fact that he has completely and comprehensively done his assignment. In his own eyes he has done well.

## 5: M.S. Female, Theme No. 9 (4-5)

Throughout the nine themes, M.S. revealed a *feeling of indecision and inferiority*. Not being sure that she has made clear her part in the scene she describes, she calls attention to it by saying: "This is somewhat the scene I saw recently," and later in another theme, "This is one proof . . ." Again, "I remember one particular incident . . ." she says, describing the thoughts of a freshman called to the Dean's office, not as though she understood and sympathized, but as though the boy's thoughts were her own. Since she has transferred the focus of attention to him, she explains how he feels and does not again refer to her part in telling the story.

Often she *feels apart from the crowd* but hesitates to admit it. In describing the scene in the station, she writes: "In the mad rush for taxis I felt left out of everything. Although I was a Dean of the college . . . I somehow missed the joyous life they all led." As she described the scene her rôle as dean seemed to make no difference, nor was it mentioned again in the theme. A similar evasion is apparent in the drugstore description where she admits, "I felt out of the picture. . . . All this made me feel very old and alone so I left quickly after getting my prescription." She speaks of having been "greeted warmly" by the clerk and "we soon became fast friends." Since, after a study of all nine themes, the reader finds no indication that she has any tendency toward making "fast friends," least of all with a chance acquaintance such as a drugstore clerk (although it was *he* who "greeted me warmly"), since she shows no social inclinations, it would seem that she was trying to build for herself a fictitious social character.

In the solution of the problem of the mysterious telephone call, she more directly assumes the personality of someone else, this time, Charles Adams. In all three cases she is hiding behind another person, so vaguely characterized and described that it is difficult to believe that the "I" is not the same person who gives her opinions and describes her actions in the other themes. Unwittingly, in hiding behind a fictitious character, she has continued to reveal the same personality traits that can be traced throughout her writing.

This attitude of indecision, inferiority, and lack of self-assurance is revealed in her composition. Her explanations are weak, her transitions are negligible, and she rather nervously depends upon indefinite words, such as, every, many, some, few, everyone, no one, someone, everybody, nobody, somehow, about, somewhat,

naturally, and quite. She has difficulty in organizing her thoughts, often giving an argument that either inadequately explains her position or is the opposite of what she means. She speaks of the great amount of gallantry that "has been brought out by war and not by peace," implying that this is a tribute to war; and then in her final sentence she says "this argument does not mean that I am at all in favor of war. . . ." but gives no further reasons. Had she been more resourceful, she might have found other occasions for gallantry besides wartime experience. She is so concerned with her own feeling of inferiority, and her own vacillating position, that her statements become badly confused. This is shown in single sentences as well as in a larger, more general way, for example: "The best results of college men have been fraternity men. . . . Every senior who ever had any ideals at all, in his freshman year, certainly hasn't lost any because of a fraternity. . . . Although there are some things to say against fraternities, the latter's not an argument. . . . In some fraternities there can be found boys of one type but this type of fraternity is not the real thing. . . . For example, if a freshman intended to be a doctor, he would look at upper-classmen who had the same ideas and determine whether that is the course they want or not before it is too late." Although these particular sentences reveal common errors of rhetoric, a study of all nine samples of this student's writing indicates that a personality trait underlies the inadequacies shown in her themes, and until the fundamental condition is corrected, the same type of defects will occur.

6: H.D. Male, Theme No. 108 (3-3)

Upon examining the errors made in matching the themes of this student, it becomes obvious that the readers had missed a trait more predominant and characteristic than any which had been noticed, one that carried through all nine pieces of writing. This was a *positive self-assurance* that the student expressed in each situation. His statements were *definite but neither prejudiced nor opinionated*. He is not vacillating nor does he attempt to please the reader by what he says. Whether he agrees or disagrees, he does it "heartily." He decides upon certain details to use and is willing to stand by them. They are to him the important ones. In the descriptions of the library and the drugstore, he is thorough in his observations. In discussing the scenes at the drugstore and the station, he lists people and reports conversations. Each theme



has a definite conclusion which he handles confidently. In purely descriptive themes, he has a tendency to summarize the situation by a personal reference: "And now after class I think I shall go down and pay it (the stone bench) my first visit." Again, in closing the theme on the drugstore, he says, "I think I shall go back some day." In argumentative writing he lists various reasons as his opinion, and having definitely stated them, he finishes by reminding the reader of what he has done: "I think these reasons substantiate my point"; and, "For these reasons I disagree with this lecturer." His self-assurance is often saved from becoming conceit by *a sense of humor*. He appreciates a good joke on himself, as is illustrated in his description of the mysterious telephone call. Perhaps his own attitude is unconsciously expressed in discussing the advisability of joining a fraternity. Association with other boys, according to him, should develop a personality, and further, it should "encourage him to attain his personal objectives and ideals with never any fear of standardization."

7: G.C. Female, Theme No. 115 (3-4)

G.C. is *constantly bored and in her writings looks at life as a monotonous experience in which one follows the easiest course of action*. Although to her there is nothing of particular interest in the drugstore, she describes it in great detail, but when it comes to people, "everyone knows everyone else, so it is not so much fun as it might be. . . . This goes on day after day . . . but I must admit that nothing much happens there." She neither likes nor dislikes the drugstore but she accepts it passively as a matter-of-fact part of her experience. She feels that the stone bench and the classroom chair, likewise, get accustomed to the same incidents of happiness and sorrow day after day. She does not tell of a particular occasion involving definite characters, but dismisses the situation instead with a few weak generalizations.

In the station, she is a little more aware of descriptive possibilities of the scene, and shows interest. "I found myself carefully watching the passengers who were coming in . . ." but this interest does not last long. She projects her own feelings, dismissing the people whom she saw at the station by saying: ". . . they could start on their dull routine once more." She finds in the library an opportunity to work "quickly and quietly," and to get "material on any subject in a few minutes by merely asking for it at the desk. . . . Not to study is a bad habit." If a child has not

the "right home background he finds a way of escape by means of what is shown to him at the moving-pictures. . . . Sometimes when they are up against it they may be tempted to use this knowledge."

The only indication that she has any consciousness of her boredom to the extent of doing anything about it is in the theme on the mysterious telephone call, in which she becomes bored while waiting for the call to be completed. She admits that "no one can imagine how disappointed I was feeling . . ." and then goes into detail unnecessarily to explain what the call was and why there was a delay. This attitude of ennui is displayed noticeably in her writing. In all nine themes her paragraphs were extremely short and simple. She would start to discuss a subject, and since it failed to hold her interest, she would begin a new paragraph treating another subject to which she was equally indifferent. Consequently, her short paragraphs came to be characteristic of her writing, as her boredom had become characteristic of her attitudes.

8: M.K. Female, Theme No. 32 (7-7)

The predominating characteristics that M.K. shows in her writing are a *lack of interest in the task, and sometimes a detachment and self-consciousness*. These are revealed in various ways. In the description of the scenes in the drugstore and in the station, she is definitely an outsider and is resigned to not being one of the crowd. In the imaginative theme dealing with the stone bench, she tells the story of two other girls. The incident is akin to wishful thinking in which she touches upon the larger aspects of the day-dream but omits details. "They discussed everything that had happened since they had parted the last time," and she dismisses the subject. In two other themes this becomes a lack of self-assurance. Imagination fails to carry her to the point of believing that a classroom chair could talk; but 'if it could, it would,' etc., etc. This lack of assurance hardly seems to come from any practical, matter-of-fact attitude, but rather from a reserve within herself. She finds it difficult to imagine getting a mysterious telephone call, but 'if she did, she would,' etc., etc. This theme comprises a description of her own reaction rather than an exposition of the call. She describes her self-consciousness when she "would see all these people staring at me. . . ." And she continues: "I think it would irritate me more than other people, because I detest using a phone." Any real understanding by her of her own problem is doubtful, since her course of action is obvi-

ously that of an over-correction whereby she resorts to temper and anger for the benefit of the people who are watching her. She has no interest in what the call might be; she is more concerned with the possible attitude of anyone who happens to see her, and feels it so strongly that it does not occur to her that she might pass unnoticed. She is conscious of someone else who might want to use the telephone, "and they would give me anything but a sweet look."

M.K. is *défiant*, but she does not understand her defiance; nor is she likely to have friends close enough to help her to make an adjustment to it. She also has a *consistently defensive attitude* which is shown by the recurrent use of the word, "because," after the most simple and obvious statements. The chief value of a fraternity house, according to her, is a substitute for home. "A fraternity gives a freshman the place to go and feel that it is his house and in that way it helps him from becoming lonely, because of the lack of a place to go and call his own." She projects her feelings here in preference to discussing the relation of a sorority to her own experience. She remains an outsider because she suffers too much from self-consciousness to feel herself a part of the crowd. This constant conflict whereby her attention is divided between whatever she is doing, on the one hand, and social opinion, on the other, is revealed in her writing by a general lack of organization and a carelessness that was noted by each investigator. Words are omitted, the use of commas ignored, phrases repeated, and occasionally there are fragmentary sentences. Only once does she say anything which reveals a personal interest; and that was a reference to a statement made by a professor. More often, her only way to meet her problem was by following (probably without realizing why) a pattern of action most like that of the other college girls from whom she feels apart. Her themes, similarly, show no originality; but her attempt to do and write "as the other girls" is not sufficiently successful to identify her as one of them. She remains a detached and self-conscious outsider.

#### 9: M.C. Female, Theme 13 (5-3)

M.C. seems to have one or two conflicts and a lively imagination. Reportorial or discursive subjects do not interest her unless there is an opportunity to use her imagination. She treats a social situation from the standpoint of her own immediate experience; but she has *little interest in involved thinking*. *She wants excitement*.



The situation at the railroad station pleases her. "There seemed to be hundreds of people. . . . Noise! lots of it. Life! People moving around." Again she writes, "The corner drugstore is one place where no one, well—hardly anyone, can be bored. There is life. It moves, it surges all around you." The noises in the drugstore are pleasing, the idle conversation highly amusing.

Writing on the soliloquy of the classroom chair, she places it in the category of a "not very exciting piece of furniture." Her interest perhaps is in *amusement that requires the least exertion*, and she regards her environment from that point of view.

*The only conflict which seems to be recurrent is a financial one.* It is "more or less a waste of money" for a freshman to join a fraternity his first year since he cannot live in the house till he is a sophomore. She deplores the necessity of using a pay-station for a telephone call. "I should be at the house now to use that phone so I wouldn't have to spend a nickle." Again, she decides that the mysterious telephone call is not a trick: "—no—no one would waste a nickel that way." There is no indication that she realizes or admits conflict on money matters, or that she does anything about it.

She appears in certain other ways to lack confidence, initiative, resourcefulness, and a capacity for self-understanding. In writing about the classroom chair, for example, she says: "How it must have giggled or groaned when I gave one of my impossible answers to an important question." She admits having "tried in vain to listen with interest to the tedious ramblings of the teachers." She describes a particular day as "just another Sunday afternoon practically wasted sipping 'cokes' at the Greeks." It was there that she "walked self-consciously into the telephone booth." When she muses aloud in the railroad station, she "then looked around to see if anyone were near enough to hear."

#### 10: A.R. Female, Theme No. 99 (5-5)

The judgments of A.R. given by each investigator were made on the basis of a *surety and self-confidence* that followed throughout the writing. She was as well able to write on the imaginative subjects as on the discursive. She seems to believe in making the most of her opportunities, and when the situation is not exactly to her planning, makes the adjustment to suit her purpose. She finds no reason why a student should lose his personality by joining a fraternity, and takes instead the practical point of view that "the

only way for an organization to succeed is through the individual." Accordingly she places upon the freshman the responsibility of using the fraternity as a "guidepost to aid him in satisfying his personality needs, and constructing his own individualism." This might indicate an insight into her own personality since, on the one hand, she never allows herself to be dominated by others, and on the other hand, she has confidence in following her own course of action.

She has positive criticisms to make for the moving-pictures. She sees the use of the library as a privilege available to students. When two of her men friends go to the campus in a taxi and leave her without one, she very resourcefully finds it as convenient to ride with two other boys going the same way. That she does not know them is nothing to her. Instead of being disgruntled, she sees a way out of her difficulties by following a course of action that pleases her just as well. "All right! We'll show them!" and she tells the boys in the second taxi, "We're going up with you. . . . Aren't you glad?"

Her *balance and adjustment* are further brought out in the stone bench episode in which she sees again an old friend who had expected her not to recognize him. She is frankly glad to see him, and "of course she'd love to introduce him to the Dean." She is confident, poised, says what she means, and is never at a loss to express herself, no matter what kind of writing the subject requires. It is *natural for her to try to do well* in that it is not an obviously conscious attempt, either in her writing or in her social relationships. She seems sure of what she wants to do and shows no hesitancy in doing it.

11: D.M. Male, Theme No. 45 (4-6)

D.M. is *given to day-dreaming*. His telephone call was from a mysterious girl who took a personal interest in him: "She didn't want me to go away." After he had waited ten minutes and had joined his companions again, "the front door opened and the prettiest girl I had ever seen walked in. She had on an evening gown that hung to the floor and a handsome black sable coat over that. Her cheeks were painted a little and there was a red glow to her lips. She was a blonde." Of course she asked for him particularly and wanted to speak to him in her car. "I walked to the door with her on my arm. You can imagine the amazement of my pals. As I walked to the door all I could think about was, 'Why do men

prefer blondes?" In his wishful thinking, D.M. plays the rôle of a sought after young man who impresses his friends by being called for publicly by a strange but beautiful woman.

In describing the scene at the railroad station, he projects his day-dreaming. One of his characters is a girl who met on her vacation "the peachiest boy-friend. He took me to the show every night. We're engaged to be married in June. . . . Say, has he got money? His father owns the largest copper plant in the country." He continues to day-dream when he gets a soda at the drugstore, and falls in love with the blonde girl who waits on him; but here he is able to stand off and laugh at himself a little for "She went about her business with no concern for me at all. . . . I was in a daze as I walked back to the frat house. I knew I was lovesick."

At times he is more aware of his part in the situation and rebels, although *he does nothing to adjust himself*. "Fraternities," according to him, "are the bunk." He does not find it possible to be a member of a fraternity and at the same time retain his individuality. "One loses part of his freedom when he joins because he has to follow the house. If you are separate you can think and do for yourself." His rebellion, however, is passive, and he sees no course of action to follow whereby he can be a fraternity member and an individual.

He is very emphatic in his ideas on the training of children who "must be made to mind when small and not to be able to do as they please. They should be brought up to go to church and behave. Schools should teach discipline more than they do." After reading his ideas on what a class-room chair might have to say if it could talk, one wonders just what D.M.'s behavior is in the home, the church, and the school; because here, again, a conflict is apparent and would seem to indicate a general, though perhaps not a very serious, maladjustment to the situations with which he, as a freshman, is confronted.

12: W.S. Male, Theme No. 69 (3-5)

The investigator who made only three correct matchings for this set of themes judged them upon the basis of a superficial, mediocre style and an attempt to be impressive. Since only three of the matchings of one of the readers were correct, one would infer that the traits that had appeared to be obvious were not consistent character traits occurring throughout the nine themes. The other reader, who made five correct matchings, noted a *lack of ascendancy*



*and a lack of initiative.* When, in the theme on the telephone conversation, W. S. is not the "Jack" who is wanted, he makes no attempt to seize the opportunity and go out with Cicely. Instead he foregoes his chance and lets another Jack take the call, although he, himself, wants to go to the party. He says nothing to the other Jack about it, but he feels it keenly: "He went to the party and I was left out in the cold for the evening." The same trait appears again in his theme on the stone bench. A young freshman who is very much in love is trying to get up his courage to kiss the girl. "He remembered the time he had attempted to kiss her and she had lowered her eyes and moved away. He was wondering if she cared; he certainly did. Finally he spoke: 'Gosh, we've been sitting here quite a time. Let's go down to the corner and get a soda.'"

The fact that he writes about a situation of this sort and sees the humor of it would indicate that he recognizes his own position. The only evidence of this fact, however, in his writing itself is in an emphasis which he gives when no emphasis is needed. "To say that the moving-picture is the principle cause for crime among children is certainly an outrageous statement . . . but it is certainly wrong." The occasional use of superlatives where they are not necessary would point further to a *slight over-correction*; but for the most part, he may be aware of a feeling of inferiority without doing anything about it. In the station, he "likewise was drawn into the bustling," but until he was "drawn in" he made no attempt to be a part of the crowd. In discussing gallantry he mentions one or two ineffective instances of warfare and, instead of substantiating his argument, he merely reiterates his position: "I repeat, there is no show of gallantry." When it came to discussing the loss of a freshman's personality in a fraternity, he was at an entire loss and had nothing to say beyond an introductory sentence. He neither defended nor refuted the statement, but said nothing, just as he did nothing about Cicely, about making love to his sweetheart, and about being drawn into a crowd of students at the station. Even in a possible awareness of his situation he does very little; and what correction he does make is inadequate and ineffectual.

13: T.N. Male, Theme No. 76 (7-6)

Throughout T.N.'s writing there ran a note of *natural, good-natured frankness* that formed the basis of matching. Even in his descriptive writing he is *conversational* and sometimes *intimately friendly*. He tells the reader what his own opinion is *without at-*

*tempting to be impressive.* He has ideas and tells them, but he never claims that he is an authority. Sometimes he makes a point of admitting his inefficiency as a judge of a situation, as when he says, "Now I confess that I am very poorly informed about War, its strategy and its customs. I think myself below average in that respect." In T.N.'s frankness and good nature, one feels a spontaneity and whole-heartedness that is never forced. In his description of the station he is detached, and not one of the crowd who are returning to college; because at that moment he is giving his entire attention to the reader of the theme. He speaks of the students as leaving the station to get a taxi, "thence to disappear from you and to enter their own domain. Completely apart from you plain and unromantic mortals. Is there not a glamour about them. Don't you feel old. Are you going to send your boy to college. We'll bet you are." For the moment, he is concerned with having the reader see the crowd at the station and feel the excitement of youth as he feels it. His frankness becomes a *spontaneous desire to share an experience.*

This tendency is shown in a slightly different, but equally unmistakable fashion, in the theme on the stone bench. Here he is so interested in describing what happened that he loses himself in the tragedy of his characters. A girl is saying good-bye to a boy on his departure for war. "She worshipped him then because she knew he was right; she knew he'd come back. He knew he'd come back." One feels that he is so whole-hearted in his sympathy for his characters that he is almost enjoying speechlessness. The drama has swept him off his feet, and he is enjoying the tenseness of the situation he has described. In the final theme to be matched the same characteristics were found, a good-natured frankness combined with a *familiar optimism.* He cannot be wholly objective, but he must include as remote a person as the reader:

"And there it is. And if you are convinced that the campus drugstore pictures college life as it is, perhaps you are starting to wonder. But you must have noticed the general cheerfulness. Everybody is having a good time. They'll settle down after graduation. You'll see."

14: R.B. Male, Theme No. 91 (4-5)

Both investigators felt that the predominant, characteristic trait of R.B. was *the attempt to be impressive by the use of long words and high-sounding phrases.* Sometimes he was so concerned with a

particular word that he lost the trend of the sentence and consequently said something different from what he meant. As, for example, "And a knowledge of his faults better enables him to obliterate them in favor of better." R.B. launches bravely into an argument that the moving-pictures do not exert so great an influence as the home and the school; but having started he becomes so interested in how his argument is going to sound to others that he concludes by saying, "the observance of certain pictures will cause at the most nothing but a temporary and small-sized affect." When he has to concentrate on a descriptive or expository paragraph, his *details are often good*; but his desire to be impressive, his consciousness of how it is going to sound to the reader, is more important than the actual choice of words or the framing of the sentence.

Both of these characteristics appear in the theme on the mysterious telephone call. Naming over several girls who might be calling him, he attempts to be nonchalant; but the effort is forced, and one feels that he is trying to impress the reader with the fact that he is just the kind of freshman who is constantly bothered by telephone calls from a long list of admirers. Being impressive, however, is not always appropriate to the situation; his feeling for social opinion comes suddenly to the foreground: "Ten minutes, what do they think I am, a sucker. No girl can make a fool out of me. I'll hang up. . . . Some d— dame tryed to pull a smart trick on me. Thought I'd stand there like a fool and wait for someone. Not me."

In the theme on the soliloquy of the stone bench he starts with numerous descriptive details, attempting to impress the reader, as he himself was impressed by the beauty of the night. In the last few lines, however, there is brought out an entirely new element which neither investigator had noticed in any of the six themes previously read. He sees a girl huddled on the stone bench, and "feeling quite paternal," he asks if he can help her.

" 'Yes,' said the girl in a soft voice, 'you can.' "

" 'How,' I hesitatingly asked. "

" 'You can keep right on moving big boy,' she hissed through her teeth. "

Here he seems to show a certain insight, a willingness to laugh at his possibly ridiculous position. This trait had not been apparent in the previous themes nor could either investigator find a trace of it upon re-reading. In the last theme in this program,



however, this flash of insight into his own character seemed to appear in a slightly different form, although here again there may have been the attempt to be impressive, this time through extreme simplicity. The scene in the college drugstore had been described as typical, and he quotes the usual obvious conversation between college students. He goes further, however, in his conclusion:

“Leisurely we leave out seat, put on our coat, look around as much as possible, without appearing too inquisitive and drift up to the cashier’s desk at the door.

“‘Working hard tonight?’ we ask as we hand the cashier our money.

“‘A little,’ comes the mechanical reply.”

Here he has been himself making a conscious and impressive departure, but he pauses for one more good detail in his observation of the character of the cashier. Possibly it was only another instance of trying to impress the reader by his apt observation; but it might also have been that by way of impressing the reader, he was making a keener study of people and choosing more carefully the detail which best characterized a person or a situation. At least his writing in these few themes would indicate that such a theory is not impossible.

15: T.F. Male, Theme No. 26 (5-3)

*A cheery optimism* is traceable throughout the nine themes that T.F. wrote, and this, combined with a *detached attitude*, proved to be the basis upon which the matchings were made. *The detachment in this case is linked with a definite desire to do well.* In themes dealing with social relationships where his imagination is allowed some play, he occasionally rounds off a paragraph or theme with a particularly apt brief sentence that connotes a great deal more than is expressed. In the description of the scene at the bus terminal he seems to be aware of this: “The first fellow to step out of the bus made a remark that seemed to express the feeling of all the students who followed him. His remark was pungent and short. ‘Aw, nuts.’” He finishes this theme with a better and more optimistic example of the same tendency. After having a brief conversation with a girl he would like to know, he says, “Somehow, I didn’t mind the rain so much after that.”

In another theme, after a fake telephone conversation, he says: “The joke was on me. Even if I did have to pay for all the sodas, I enjoyed mine to the full, because—well, because *she* was across

the table." In the theme on the meditation of the stone bench, this same characteristic comes out in a slightly different way. Here there is an unmistakable touch of romance, again suggested rather than definitely expressed.

This trait of an optimistic attempt at style was traceable in all of the themes dealing with social relationships and imaginative instances; but in the themes calling for descriptive or argumentative material, a different trait appears. This latter tendency expresses itself in a situation calling for his opinion, and takes the form of *hesitating and 'hedging' in giving a direct answer*. Sometimes he adopts the method of asking questions and answering them himself. By becoming oratorical, for example, he seeks to cover the fact that he has little to contribute on the subject of gallantry. Thinking comes hard to him; and because he has to devote so much attention to thought processes, he gets tangled in his vocabulary either using the wrong word or the wrong form of the word. According to him, fraternities "may have the direction opposite effect upon him." Having hedged throughout the theme, having become tangled in the choice of words and in his sentences and paragraphs, he dismisses the subject perfunctorily by saying, "Therefore, I conclude that the above statement depends too much on certain conditions."

In discussing the influence of the moving-pictures on children he is once more confronted with a definite problem. Again he hedges. In an attempt to do his task without making an effort to think, he again loses himself in loose sentences and wrong words. "I know some concrete facts to prove this statement," he says, but he is wary of giving them. This reaction is probably not so much an attempt to bluff his way out of a difficulty as it is *an aversion or inability for clear, orderly thinking*. He rambles on with mere words and lends importance to his conclusion by a personal observation: "I have also heard other parents (wiser, I think) who did not make the objectional picture seem of paramount importance, but merely ridiculed it with a clever"—and then the bell rang, and how relieved he must have been to be able to conclude the sentence with, "Not finished." He was perhaps just as glad at another time when he heard the bell ring and was able to end his library description in the same fashion "No more time."

On a subject dealing with people he seems to be able to write most easily. His thoughts come to him without apparent effort, and

be evidently has no difficulty in expression. When, however, he is confronted with a subject dealing with definite descriptive material and requiring thought, he finds difficulty in expressing himself. He is frightened into a corner, but realizes that he must make an answer. The direct attack finds him with nothing to say; but feeling that he must make a good showing (possibly to maintain a certain standard), he tries to say something. Hence his writing reveals faults that might perhaps be attributed to 'carelessness' by a reader who did not understand their deeper basis, but which are, in reality, traceable to this fundamental difficulty of giving a direct opinion upon a direct problem.

16: F.B. Female, Theme No. 56 (6-0)

F.B.'s themes prove to be of special interest, since one investigator made six correct matchings, and the other, none. In the latter case an attempt was made to judge on the basis of compartmentalized thoughts apparent in the first theme to be read, namely the report of the celebration of the founding of the library. The *careful choice of details* was also present in later themes, but this was not a constant and identifiable characteristic. In the last theme to be matched, the description of the mysterious telephone call, the same investigator chose the wrong theme on the basis of a characteristic that proved to be correct. This was due to the fact that a particular theme of another student happened to show the same tendency. In the final group of five were two themes showing that the writers were unable to see any humor in a fake telephone call. If the correct matching had been made, it would have been due largely to chance; for, since no other characteristic traits were present, this trait of lack of humor was the one which had to be employed in matching. Thus, after correcting the matchings of eight themes, the reader sought correctly in the ninth the trait that would have identified it, and it was partly by chance that her choice was unsuccessful.

After a correction of the series and a final re-reading, it could be noted that the student *had certain inhibitions* which were revealed in various ways and seemed to lack a consistent personality pattern. There are indications of a definite attempt to do well; but she hesitates to commit herself to a direct statement of opinion. "To a certain degree," she says, "I agree with the statement the lecturer made, but I believe that it should be modified." Again she writes, "I believe the two sides of the question about equally balance each other."



Wherever possible she uses imaginative characters, and does not, in the first person, enter the situation she is discussing. Her characters, however, which are well drawn, interest her as people, rather than from any desire to hide herself in the rôle of a person she admires. Occasionally, however, there are possible indications of the girl who is describing her characters. She appears as *an enthusiastic, exuberant person who likes to be in the thick of things*. For example, "It was a vigorous, energetic rain that was beating against the window panes of the bus terminal—the kind you like to feel beating against your face and the kind that washes the landscape clean." Later in the same theme she writes, "The three boys bounded out into the rain followed by the wistful gaze of a sophisticated freshman who would have given one of her brand-new traveling bags to meet the bronzed crew-captain." The same attitudes are present in her discussion of sororities. "I have found it to be true that most sorority girls live for and think about one thing the major part of the time—boys. A girl cannot be 'in the swim' if she doesn't talk about boys and receive calls from them, she is ostracized. If she doesn't have dates, he is impossible. In order to make a place in the lives of these girls, you must know their language, which is built about the words 'date' and 'men'!"

In her imaginative themes, traits that were outstanding in the character she used were mistaken by one of the investigators for traits of the writer, and were accordingly wrongly sought in later themes. The inhibitions that seemed apparent in the discursive themes were absent in imaginative pieces of writing; and the compartmentalized style in the description of the library became, in themes read later, a careful choice of details joined carefully by transitional words.

#### 17: V.V. Female, Theme No. 127 (3-4)

Not until the fifth theme in this set was read did either investigator make any correct matchings. By the time that the first four themes had been correctly put together and the fifth matched to them, it became obvious that V.V.'s outstanding, characteristic trait was *a simple, optimistic, attitude towards life and people*. She had come to college with a very firm faith in her illusions, a confidence in her idealistic outlook from a limited experience. "When a person comes to college he is old enough and experienced enough to have formed a good many of his ideas and ways concerning life." When she receives a mysterious telephone call, it does not occur to

her that it might mean illness, death or a serious accident; instead it's a good joke. She finds it a source of amusement to relate to her friends: "I'll tell Helen; it will please her." She is hampered by no feeling of indignation, by no prejudice or ill-feeling. The same characteristic is apparent in her discussion of the cinema where she says: ". . . not all pictures are bad. A great many of them are fine and instructive." She feels that constructive criticism will do more for any cause than has yet been accomplished. War is to her a source of gallantry, "but not the only place we meet strife and conflict. There is a battle within people themselves. . . ." If there is a conflict within herself, she seems to have become adjusted and to have reached a state of conscious happiness. She does not obviously play Pollyanna; but it is a part of her nature to be happy in a straightforward, unaffected fashion. Her ideas and comments are not very profound, but they are probably as profound as it is possible for her to be. It is interesting to note that this characteristic revealed itself in her writing in *simple, direct, declarative sentences, never very involved, never very complex.*

18: J.E. Male, Theme No. 120 (3-3)

Both readers felt that J.E. *makes an effort to "get by" and is content with doing as little as possible.* Six of the nine themes were short; but in the themes where he had least to say, he expressed himself with the greatest confidence. In his longer themes he *has consciously elaborated a single, simple idea*; but in his attempt to add two or three paragraphs more than the content would justify, he becomes tangled in his sentence structure and involved in his use of words. In describing the library, he says: "Its facial appearance of broad white steps and four pillars are anything but uninviting. . . . First inside is a corridor with the director's office at the left as you go in." This might easily be classed as awkward writing, but from our point of view, the cause is more important; the student has probably failed to reach a standard of good writing because it is easy for him to do only enough to "get by," and anything beyond that is forced, conscious, and inadequate. *He is so self-conscious in what he is trying to do* that he arranges his material poorly, chooses his details unwisely, and expresses himself haltingly. Take, for example, the imposing gesture of this final sentence: "In memory of this fact may every student pause in celebration of this anniversary." In attempting to appreciate the importance of the laying of the cornerstone of the library, and

in trying to report it with befitting dignity, he attaches undue significance to the occasion.

In the imaginative theme on the classroom chair, in order to *make himself clear with the minimum of effort*, he explains, "I will impersonate the chair," instead of using his imagination to suggest this fact to the reader without painful literalness. Again, he is "getting by." He seldom resorts to anecdote in developing a subject. His facts are simple, and he includes all that are, to him, necessary. His conclusions are abrupt, and, when studied throughout his themes, give rise to the impression that he is in haste to finish a task which he feels he has done well enough. The longest of his themes, the meditations of a stone bench, is hardly original; but the choice of his story might prove interesting in studying further the themes of this student. The subject, the sacrifice of one man's honor for his brother's, has no relation to any characteristics indicated in the other eight themes. At the end, he is self-conscious and once more becomes aware of himself as a student doing class writing. Up to this point his construction had been fairly smooth; but here he says: "And there in the dark a small hand grasp his in a grasp of agreement and decision." He does not characteristically make verb errors; but in this theme, from the beginning to the end, he has lost himself in the thread of his narrative, and in his confusion he makes errors.

In another theme, which is also longer than he ordinarily writes, he introduces humor to develop his subject matter. Being aware, however, that his theme is long enough, he concludes, "Oh, an idea! A chance to save money. So my roommate and I had a soda." In this case, as in the previous instance, the error is not characteristic, but is probably made in his consciousness of himself at the close of the theme, an awareness that now he has written enough to "get by."

#### 19: H.C. Female, Theme No. 79 (4-4)

H.C.'s outstanding characteristics upon which the matchings were made are *positiveness and ascendancy*. She is rarely submissive, although in the description of the scene at the stone bench she indicates that *her aggressiveness and her positivism may be a pose*, and that upon occasion, although it is not easy for her to do so, she can defer to other people's wishes and can make an adjustment to a situation that is not altogether to her liking. She describes two people sitting on a stone bench after a quarrel:



" 'Let's sit here . . . '

" 'I have to be in at ten o'clock . . . '

" 'You have half an hour . . . '

" ' . . . and let you get me campused again? '

" Silence.

" 'Finally he said, 'My watch was wrong.'

" 'Original remark,' she said.

" Silence.

" 'I'm sorry.'

" 'I know.'

" 'I'll never bring you in late again.'

" 'I'll say you won't!'

" Silence.

" 'That was horrid of you.'

" 'I'm sorry.'

" Silence.

" 'Forgive me?'

" 'I guess so . . . '

" 'Good heavens! It's two minutes past ten. I'm two minutes late. . . . Oh, I knew I'd get campused again. Let's go.' "

Here in the short cryptic sentences used in conversation, she is *definite, direct*, confident and self-assured. She shows here the same independence of social opinion, the same superficial and perhaps pretended lack of consideration for the regard of others, which is indicated in the mysterious telephone call:

" 'At the end of ten minutes I heard a voice say, 'Never mind. I'll call you up tomorrow.'

" 'I slammed down the receiver and hissed at the telephone, 'Not if I know about it you won't.' "

Ostensibly she is here so sure of herself and what she wants to do that she does not want to talk to him when he calls up "tomorrow." Her quick retort and seeming independence of speech and action may indicate an over-correction. Actually, she perhaps does care about her adjustment in her social relationships; but her defense is so immediate that it passes for self-confidence. In her discursive writing on the value of the fraternity, she is vaguely on the defensive: "It would be far better for the individual . . . to be associated with and get to know well all different kinds and types of people. This is one of the great values of college, which is partially lost through fraternity life. . . . It takes a variety of acquaintances to crystallize a personality and bring a person's in-

dividual objective to a satisfactory attainment." In her discussion of fraternities she indicates an attitude that is hardly consistent with the independence and assurance she apparently intends to show. She will not quibble, argue, or explain, but instead she makes her statements so direct and definite that they will characterize her as self-confident and independent. *She wishes to appear, in her particular group, an individual who has no conflicts and has made her adjustment to every social situation.*

20: M.H. Female, Theme No. 25 (1-1)

M.H. proved interesting because each investigator found an outstanding, but not clearly identified, characteristic that did not follow through the entire set of themes. Upon correction of the matchings, however, and after a study of the writing, the same characteristic was traceable, but was seen to be slightly different in quality than the investigators had at first supposed. In the description of the railroad station, the student imagines herself to be a man and a person older than herself, and writes her theme in the first person. The observations are consistently those of the character whom she portrays. In this instance the dramatization was so complete that it seemed to the reader that M.H. might have an inferiority complex and might be using this as a means of escape. Accordingly, because this seemed to be so strongly evident in one of the first themes to be read, the same characteristic was sought in later writings; but it proved to be a wrong evaluation. In no other instance does she definitely impersonate a character. In the descriptions of the drugstore and of the telephone call, her conversational style is *confident, easy, and in keeping with the situation*. Each theme shows some imagination; but she has not handled her material as definitely and concisely as in the description of the station.

The other imaginative theme on the stone bench is short and limited in ideas; but after a second reading, the investigators found a dramatic brevity that is equally apparent in the other fanciful compositions. *She has a flair for a dramatic situation*, although she does not necessarily have to play the important rôle in it. She seems to be an agreeable companion among her friends, but she does believe strongly in "the growth of individualism" and the need for young people to "make individual efforts to develop their own minds, think their own thoughts, and create their own ideals." She knows herself well enough to be willing to take the responsi-

bility of her own adjustments to social relationships and objects to a young man's joining a fraternity on the grounds that "he will lose his individualism and become a member of the herd, ready to follow the man who is most popular at the moment, thus doing away with his own capacity for thought." Her attitude is not one of over-correction; she is not prejudiced because she has or has not been asked to join a Greek letter organization. Instead she is weighing the advisability of joining from the point of view of the needs of her own personality and is making generalizations. There may possibly be some slight conflict concerning her family because she is conscious of the necessity of a student's helping himself to get adjusted; otherwise, "the efforts of the family will be wasted." It is true, however, that she has a keen sense of the dramatic which is revealed in various ways in both descriptive and reportorial writing; and it is equally true that, whether she may or may not be aware of this trait, she *goes to the extreme neither of ascendancy nor of submission, but appears to be adjusted.*

In the discursive theme on the influence of the moving-pictures upon a child, her thesis deals with the home background as of more potential importance in the moulding of strong characters. It is only when away from the influence of the home that moving-pictures have a lure for children. The fact that this is one of her longest themes may indicate an interest in the subject of home environment. Another reference to the home that may be significant is in the description of the scene at the stone bench, in which, once more, the thesis is based on the difficulties of the home environment and the very real effect of the depression. Whether this home interest is really one of M.H.'s characteristic traits cannot, however, be definitely stated from the study of this limited number of samples.

In order to exhibit these cases in more tangible form, a summary is presented on page 65.

(b) *Analysis of Faults in Relation to Personal  
Characteristics in Writing*

We turn now from general character sketches to specific errors in composition to which particular students are prone. Although the type of study approached in this section is qualitative, and does not inform us statistically of the extent to which students' errors can be traced to personal characteristics, it does present interesting possibilities. For it shows that certain errors which might be considered by the teacher as isolated instances of ignorance or careless-



## SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES

1. D. W. Female (5-5)	A feeling for atmosphere. A well-balanced sense of humor. A quiet, amused tolerance of social relations and situations.
2. C. C. Male (3-5)	Naturalness and confidence. Never at a loss for a new idea, and takes the change lightly. Unreserved and spontaneous—conscious that he must get ahead in the world. Expects life to be a battle.
3. F. A. Female (6-5)	A naturalness of attitude: a confident adjustment in social relationships. Independence of action.
4. B. S. Male (3-4)	Wants to make good impression. Attempts to do well the task assigned to him. Factual and comprehensive.
5. M. S. Female (4-5)	Feeling of indecision and inferiority. Feels apart from the crowd.
6. H. D. Male (3-3)	A positive self assurance. Definite, but neither prejudiced nor opinionated. Sense of humor.
7. G. C. Female (3-4)	Constantly bored. Looks at life as a monotonous experience in which one follows the easiest course of action.
8. M. K. Female (7-7)	Lack of interest in the task; detachment, self-consciousness. Defiant, without understanding her defiance. Consistently defensive attitude.
9. M. C. Female (5-3)	Little interest in involved thinking. Wants excitement. Amusement that requires the least exertion. Financial conflict.
10. A. R. Female (5-5)	Surety and self-confidence. Balance and adjustment. Natural for her to try to do well.
11. D. M. Male (4-6)	Given to day dreaming. Does nothing to adjust himself.
12. W. S. Male (3-5)	Lack of ascendance and initiative. Slight over-correction.
13. T. N. Male (7-6)	Natural, good-natured frankness. Conversational, sometimes intimately friendly. Does not attempt to be impressive. Spontaneous desire to share an experience. Familiar optimism.
14. R. B. Male (4-5)	Attempt to be impressive by the use of long words and high-sounding phrases. Details often good.
15. T. F. Male (5-3)	Cheery optimism. Detached attitude. The detachment linked with a desire to do well. Hesitating in giving a direct answer. Aversion or inability for clear, orderly thinking.
16. F. B. Female (6-0)	Careful choice of details. Certain inhibitions. Enthusiastic, exuberant. Likes to be in the thick of things.
17. V. V. Female (3-4)	Simple, optimistic attitude toward life and people. Simple, direct, declarative sentences.
18. J. E. Male (3-3)	Makes an effort to "get by." Content with doing as little as possible. Consciously elaborates a single idea. Self-conscious in what he is trying to do. Tries to make himself clear with the minimum of effort.
19. H. C. Female (4-4)	Positiveness and ascendance. Her aggressiveness may be a pose. Definite, direct. Wishes to appear in her group as having no conflicts and as having made an adjustment to every social situation.
20. M. H. Female (1-1)	Confident, easy, in keeping with the situation. Flair for the dramatic. Goes to neither extreme of ascendance or submission. Adjusted.

ness may really have a common, fundamental basis. By revealing and attacking this deeper origin, the individual may be led, through self-understanding, to changes of attitude which may be reflected not only in the elimination of these particular faults, but in all his writing. In the themes of a certain young woman, for example, both investigators noted that there was a quality of aloofness, a manner of pointing to the human scene, of 'letting us hear' what conversation was taking place, and the like. The impression created was that the writer wished to hold her own detachment from her subject-matter ever before the reader's notice. Even in discussing an abstract proposal, the same personal aloofness from certain common opinions (which she was merely transmitting) was maintained. In certain instances this detachment produced a stilted effect which might well have been classified as a fault. Now upon reading further themes written by this student, the investigators were able to make out, in connection with this reaction, a feeling of superiority or a cynical condescension. This note may have been compensatory (an adjustment made as a defense against shyness, lack of experience, or a feeling of inferiority); or it may have had some other meaning. In any case there is the possibility that this trait of heightened self-feeling may be the truly characteristic element of this student's writing, underlying not only the attitude of aloofness, but other characteristic details as well. A teacher who understood this fact would obviously be in a better position to help the student than one who merely wrote 'awkward,' or 'stilted,' opposite the passages in which such an aloofness occurred.

A few other examples in briefer form are added. Although the reader may have the feeling, partly justified, that the faults cited may have been a basis on which the personality estimate was given, a reading of the case studies will show that they were by no means the entire basis. They are merely congruent with a general picture of the individual which emerges from his writing, a fact which is not apparent because the main part of the case study is here omitted. It is important also to note that the faults chosen as illustrations were not marked as faults by the investigators, but were indicated separately by other readers (two teachers of freshman English). Hence the connection pointed out between them and the characteristics noted by the investigator may be credited with a certain degree of objectivity.

1. G.C. (male). *Characteristics noted in case study*: takes changes of subject lightly, going quickly from one topic to another; never at a loss for new ideas. *Frequent errors marked by instruc-*

*tor*: use of "this" without clear antecedent, general lack of transitions.

2. B. S. (male). *Characteristics in case study*: wants to make a good impression, choice of words indicates desire to be impressive. *Faults marked by instructor*: These may be illustrated by the following quoted phrases: "broad steps and large columns featuring the entrance" . . . "vast study sections in which are situated reading tables" . . . "the situations it could recall would compose a best-seller on any book stand" . . . "would collapse under the strain of a prodigious individual" [speaking of the classroom chair.]

3. G. C. (female). *Characteristics noted in case study*: constantly bored, looks at life as a monotonous experience in which one follows the easiest course of action. *Faults marked by instructor*: carelessness in words of reference; for example, "one may see someone whirling around." Repetition of phrases is shown in the following examples: "people who go out to fight" . . . "desire to go out and kill" . . . (and there was still another repetition). These quotations are taken from the theme on gallantry in war.

4. T. N. (male). *Characteristics noted in case study*: good-natured, easy, conversational manner. *Faults marked by instructor*: repetitions of words, apparently because of the effort required to find other words; loose, careless, or colloquial phrases, such as "the biggest bunch of conformists" . . . "and it would be fine to conform to good examples," etc.

If these few suggested cases are in any sense representative, further investigation in this field might lead to two interesting and pedagogically valuable inferences. First, a fault which might otherwise be given merely a label or placed in a certain category by the teacher, may be related to a trait having a fundamental significance in the life of the individual, and can be better understood, therefore, and dealt with by the instructor. Second, the student himself, through a knowledge of this fact, may be led to observe, to reflect, and to acquire greater insight not only into his writing, but also into himself. The problem of teaching composition may therefore serve as an approach to the more general problem of self-realization in the personality of college students.

## VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study have been (1) to discover the extent to which written compositions of students can be identified as to



their authorship on the basis of the individuality which they reveal, (2) to ascertain what other aspects (if any) of students' writing ability or progress are related to this individuality, (3) to learn how individual characteristics express themselves in the writing of compositions, and (4) to derive whatever clues may be afforded as to the guidance of students in learning to write.

Six hundred and thirty short themes written in the class room by seventy students were read in groups of five, each group being read in connection with another set of five written by the same students but arranged in haphazard order. The themes were without the names of their writers. An attempt was made to identify the work of each student by correctly matching the themes belonging to him. After each pair of matchings was made, the errors were corrected and the themes properly matched by reference to a key. Additional themes by the same students, in sets of five, were then matched to those already correctly arranged, and so on until all of the nine themes for each student had been matched. The themes employed were written at three different periods of the year, three being written in October, three in January, and three in May, an arrangement which allowed the effects of training over a period of time to be measured. Each of the three themes written in any one period represented a different type of writing, the three types being, respectively, descriptive, imaginative, and discursive. In carrying out this matching, which was done by two investigators separately, a program was followed which distributed the themes of the students in such a way as to offset the effects of practice, the influence of the character of associates' themes, and similar factors. During the matching a chart was kept by each reader in which were entered the impressions of the student's personality which the reader used as criteria in attempting to match the themes. An 'identification index' was employed, consisting of the number of correct matchings for each student's themes obtained by each investigator. Correlations were computed between the identification indices of the seventy students on the one hand and various factors, such as grades obtained on the themes, degree of improvement during the year, and results of a mental test, upon the other.

The results show that classroom themes written by students and matched under the conditions of this experiment can be identified as to authorship with an accuracy two and one-half times above chance (chance being 1.6 correct matchings, and the average obtained for the two investigators being 4.0). There were wide indi-

vidual differences among students as to the degree to which their themes could be successfully identified, the range extending from an average index of 1.0 for the two investigators to an average of 7.0. To some extent these differences may represent actual differences of students with respect to individuality shown in their themes (or perhaps possessed by them as individuals). To a considerable degree also, the index may reveal the differences of ability of the investigators in recognizing the characteristics shown in particular themes.

As to the bases on which the themes were identified, there were probably a number of different psychological criteria. Mechanical faults or other details of writing characteristic of the student were probably used to a limited extent. In most cases, however, characteristic traits were looked for and a record made of these on a chart. Although these traits had to do both with form, that is, the *manner* in which the student expressed himself, and content (the substances of what was expressed), the former contributed the more common means of identification. The investigators found themselves searching for a 'form-quality' of the individual. Evaluation of the writing from the standpoint of good English was employed as a basis of identification in certain cases, as well as formal aspects of composition, organization, and the student's orientation toward his subject. A significant fact about the process of matching themes is that the identifying characteristic one is seeking is too elusive to be stated adequately in language. It is too highly individualized to be expressed fully in the common and universal meanings attaching to words. When a word is used to describe it, there is usually a unique connotation attaching to that word in that particular instance which would be lost or altered if the same word were applied to another individual.

The proportion of correct matchings was found to increase with the increase of the number of themes upon which the matching was based. After six or seven matchings had been made, there was a higher accuracy than after the first or second matching, suggesting the greater ease with which a characteristic trait can be recognized when there are many instances from which to draw.

The correlation between the series of indices for the two investigators was low (+.28), a result which may signify that the investigators picked out different characteristics for identification in the same themes. But it may also indicate that in certain cases one investigator discovered the correct fundamental characteristic while

the other did not. Readers evidently differ in their ability to recognize the themes of particular students. Our indices were therefore a function both of the personality of the student whose themes were read and the investigator who read them. It is suggested, however, that personality be regarded as based not upon a social situation, but upon dispositions the organic bases of which, at least, are to be found in the individual himself. Upon this interpretation differences of ability of investigators to identify themes would be due to their own differences of capacity, either in general or with respect to certain types of characteristics. Hence, in this case, the more justifiable identification index would be the higher of the matching scores obtained by the two investigators, rather than the average of the two. Although the average index was used in this research for most purposes, some of the correlations were re-calculated using the higher of the two matching scores. The results obtained tend to confirm those found by the other method.

Correlations between the average identification index and other aspects of the students' performance were uniformly low. That between the average instructors' grade on the themes and the identification index was nearly zero for one investigator and slightly negative for the other. This slight negative trend may have been owing to the fact that faults were occasionally employed by one investigator as the basis of identification. The correlation between improvement in writing, as measured by relative differences in grades at the different periods of the year, and identification index was negative, but scarcely large enough to be significant. Its negative character, again, may have resulted from the partial employment of errors as a basis of identification. The lack of increase in the expression of individuality in writing during the student's training, is further proved by the equality of the identification indices for the three writing periods, October, January, and May. The correlation between intelligence, as tested by the *American Council Psychological Examination*, was positive, but too low to be significant. The students whose themes were employed in this investigation were provided by three experimental sections. One group were taken from a section in which students read their themes in class and received informal criticism from their fellow students and teacher; a second group were taken from a section in which the method of writing from literary models was employed; and a third group were taken from a section using the usual classroom procedure for teaching college English. The 'informal discussion'



section yielded the highest average identification index, and the section following the usual college procedure the lowest, though the difference was not great enough to be finally conclusive.

About twenty selected case studies, made by quoting excerpts and trying to analyze all the themes of a particular student, seemed to show that, in some cases at least, a consistent sketch could be given of the individual's personality as revealed in his writing. A qualitative study was also made of the faults of certain students in connection with these case studies; and the results seem to justify the inference that some of the writing errors characteristic of individuals may not be isolated occurrences, adequately treated by the conventional markings of the English teacher, but may spring from some underlying traits of personality which can be revealed only by studying a considerable number of themes by the same student, with the aim not of finding and correcting his errors, but of understanding him as an individual. The present research needs to be repeated and supplemented by a study not only of the students' themes, but of the students themselves. A face-to-face acquaintance with the students would indicate whether the 'writing personality,' as discoverable in the process of matching, is the *true* personality representing the individual in all of his attitudes and relationships, or whether (as seemed to be true in certain of our cases) it is a kind of substitute or compensation for something which is lacking in the student's encounter with the world of actual life. Such an investigation, combining the evidence of the traits shown in composition with that of personality tests, interviews, and similar methods, might produce results of value not only for the science of personality and the teaching of English, but for the guidance of students as individuals.

Perhaps the most significant result of this investigation is that bearing upon individuality as related to contemporary practice in the teaching of composition. It is customary, perhaps necessary, for teachers of English to use as a basis of grading themes, or of carrying on classroom instruction, certain accepted criteria of good writing. A large part of their time seems to be spent in marking such errors as incoherence, faulty reference, awkwardness, poor choice of words, lack of grammatical agreement, repetition, barbarisms, bad sentence structure, and the like. The more intangible, but equally important aspects, such as general interest, value of content, originality, and the expression of personality, seem to be neglected. One reason for this oversight is that specific faults are

more definite and easily recognizable than the latter qualities. When attention is given to the more mechanical, 'societally demanded' requirements of writing, and the more individual and personal values are slighted, we must expect a lack of uniformity in the accomplishment of students in these two directions. In substantiation of this inference, it was found that the identification index, measuring the expression of individuality in students' themes, did not correlate either with the grades on themes or with the student's scholastic improvement over the course of the year. The expression of individuality was not one of the qualities rewarded in the grading of themes. And since it was not rewarded by grades, we may infer that it was probably not encouraged in the regular process of teaching.

Another possible deduction is that the expression of individuality, quite apart from the question of its encouragement in teaching, does *not* automatically develop with improvement in the more standardized and mechanical aspects of good writing. It is a mistake to assume that it will assert itself spontaneously in proportion as the student acquires an ease and accuracy in his technique of writing. While we are training students to be 'good' writers we are not necessarily training them to be individually creative writers. And conversely, students may show individuality in their writing even though they remain poor writers from the standpoint of the socially accepted criteria. This discovery of the lack of correlation between conventional grading and identifiable individuality is, in the writers' opinion, a contribution which may have some significance for those whose task it is to develop in their students the bases of an effective style.

Individuality in writing has been commonly thought of only as skillful or *artistic* expression, that is, as the acquisition of style. Hence its serious consideration has been limited to an appreciation of the works of the classical authors or of contemporary writers of distinction. It is true that in these masters we do find a combination of 'good writing' in the ordinary sense with a highly individualized manner and point of view. It is remarkable, almost to the point of seeming paradoxical, that literary geniuses write with a maximum avoidance of the faults which our English teachers employ as a basis of their marking, an accomplishment which, since it approaches perfection, would tend to make the writing of these masters become similar. Yet on the other hand, it is equally apparent that the works of the great writers do not tend to become

similar, but become different from one another in direct proportion to their greatness. This latter phenomenon is *individuality*; it is the uniqueness of their matured traits, attitudes, and view-points, expressed through the medium of 'good writing.' Now it is an unproved assumption that such expression of individuality is possible only in the higher degrees of artistic and linguistic ability. Our results show that there are about as many cases of individuality recognizable in the writing of students of inferior capacity or training as among student of superior attainment. In some of these cases of lower ability the identification may have been derived from a consideration of the student's faults; for it is evidently easier to identify themes by their defects than by their virtues. But even if this is true, there must have been a kind of individuality about the errors themselves, that is, a particular manner of making them, which made a correct identification possible. It is true, of course, that the individuality shown in the themes of the 'poorer' students is usually unskilled in its expression. Aesthetically, it is abortive and crude. Nevertheless it is there. In some students its development will reach heights forever impossible to others. But in every instance, as long as there is this modicum of recognizable individuality, together with an interest in improvement, there exists the possibility that it may become a more effective, characteristic, and beautiful expression of the individual than was possible before.



## APPENDIX

### SAMPLES OF THEME SETS ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENT DEGREES OF IDENTIFIABILITY

To illustrate the presence or absence of recognizable individual characteristics in students' themes, such as those upon which the identification index is based, the following two sets of themes are appended. These two samples represent extreme degrees of identifiability and non-identifiability. In the first set, those of M.H., there was only one correct matching by each investigator. In the other, the themes written by M.K., there were seven correct matchings by each. Sketches of the personalities of these students, as inferred from the themes, are included among the case studies (see cases 20 and 8) presented in section V. The reader may find it interesting to compare the description given in these case studies with his own impressions upon reading the themes.

#### A. *Themes Illustrating Low Identifiability*

Subject M.H.

Case Study No. 20, p. 63

##### I.I. 1-1 (October Themes) (a)

Tomorrow, October 11, will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the Syracuse University Library, the gift of Andrew Carnegie in 1906.

The building is of stately and formal architecture. There is a rostrum in the center of the steps leading to the main entrance, which opens into the main reading room.

The resources of the library are many. Among the resources of 150,000 volumes in the general collection, there is also a Periodical department which is supplied with some of the most important periodicals, both American and foreign. Of the special collection, the most valuable is the Historical Library of Leopold Von Ranke, presented by Dr. J. M. Reid. This collection includes many rare books and pamphlets, documentary sources and medieval manuscripts of great value for research work.

##### (b)

Sometimes I have wondered what would happen if a classroom chair could talk. Probably, this is what it would say.

Dear me! I am so tired today, and everyone treats me to a bang here and a shove there. How thoughtless some people are. This morning, it was in the very first class too, the boy who uses me, was in such a bad temper that he rammed me into the table.

Of-course, I could not say anything, but I hope that some day he will acquire a little consideration for others, especially when they are as hard-working and faithful as I.

Later a little girl sat in my lap. She was not heavy, but evidently she had not prepared her lesson, for she jabbed me with her sharp heels and wriggled around until I was nearly distracted.

It is late now, and everyone has gone home. Here I am left to nurse my bruises and bangs until morning. Goodness knows how I can stand another day like today.

(c)

Gallantry is polite and defferential attention to those less capable; also, the word embrasses a sense of heroic courage. Must we have war to bring out this trait in men?

War is a state of extreme chaos. Those participating in the actual physical conflicts are under a stress of emotion so strong and keen that their deepest qualities of character cannot be hidden. Their actions express their character, and there is no more glorious sight than the inborn quality of gallantry shining under such circumstances.

However, war is not the only institution by which gallantry may be produced. Men face other dangers, physical and mental, and they face them, not fearlessly, but gallantly. They face them with heroic courage, determination, and the will to do right. That is real gallantry, and it may be found in many so-called commonplace incidents.

(January Themes)

(a)

What, No Drugs?

It was twelve o'clock, and the "Home Pharmacy" was overflowing with students. The most popular section of the store, was the soda-fountain, around which the students were gathered three-deep.

"Chocolate soda, an' make it snappy Heine," said one important acting youth as he carelessly threw a quarter on the bar.

"Say, Bert, who d'ya think ya are, the whole show? Better wait your turn. I've been sitting here for twenty minutes straight tryin' to get a "geedunk."

"Sorry frosh, you've got to know the ropes. Better luck next time. Gosh, Hiene, sodas gone up a nickel?"

"Yeh, we put more cream in 'em."

"Doesn't taste much like it. How about puttin' some chocolate in for a change?"

With this last cutting remark, "Bert" sauntered over to the cigarette counter and asked for a package of Camels.

"Sorry, we're out of Camels. How about Spuds?"

"Good-night-nurse out of camels! Why, what kind of a store is this anyway? You've certainly got enough other junk here. Look at those water-balls, whose goin' to buy them in the winter-

time? And ya haven't got any camels? That's a hot one! And those over-night bags, compacts, and toilette stuff, some drug-store. And who in thunder wants rubber aprons?"

"This place looks more like a small-town hardware store than a drugstore, and you carry all this junk and no camels? Well, s'long."

Bert cast a disgusted look around the room, saw what he was looking for, and swaggered over to the cosmetic counter.

"How ya' Mary? Going up the hill? Yeh, well, let's get going."

(b)

"As I Was Saying"

"Well, Maude, I'll tell you how it all happened. We took the car and ——"

"Oh Jane. You're wanted on the 'phone."

"Thanks Ted. Be right back Maude."

I left our table and went over to the 'phone. It took me some few minutes to push and elbow my way through the crowd. "The Greek's" is sure getting terrible, I thought, just like a bargain-basement on a Saturday.

Finally, I reached the phone and managed to pull-to the door of the booth. Why are 'phone booth doors so hard to close?

"Hello," I said.

"Hello, Hello, Jane?"

"Yes, this is she."

"Well wait just a moment. Don't go away."

Well, that's certainly a funny way to act, call me to the phone, and then tell me not to go away. Wonder who it is? Sounded rather like Jack, but why'd he call me here? I can hear a type-writer. Sounds like an office. Gee, I wonder if it could be the police station. I forgot to take my yellow-ticket down yesterday, but Dad did say he'd take care of it for me. Well, I'm in for it now, here comes someone. He certainly makes a lot of noise when he walks.

"Hello Jane?"

"Yes, yes, this is Jane, what do you want?"

"This is Bill. Say, I can't get over for you tonight until nine-thirty. I've got to see the dean for an interview at eight-thirty so ——"

"That's all right, Bill. See you at nine-thirty. Good-bye."

What a relief. Guess Dad did fix up that ticket.

"Well, Maude, I'll tell you how it all happened. We took the car and ——."

(c)

#### Fraternities and Thinkers

He will lose his individualism, and become a member of the herd, ready to follow the man who is most popular at the moment, thus doing-away with his own capacity for thought.



America needs thinkers today, men who are not bound by old mores, who do not look upon change as a curse, to be avoided. Our colleges and universities, if they accomplish nothing else, must train their young men to be thinkers. But if these same young men, do not make individual efforts to develop their own minds, think their own thought, and create their own ideals, the efforts of the family and faculty will be wasted.

It is true—and has been conceded before—that fraternities offer many advantages to freshmen. However, it would be more to their advantage to encourage the growth of individualism among their members, and to allow ideals to be created, unhampered by the standardization which now exists in most organizations of this nature.

(May Themes)

(a)

A Wetting

"The greyhound bus was late last Tuesday night, that was the night of the bad rain, remember? I never saw such a rain, but that's not what I started to tell you about. Well sir, I got down to the terminal about 7:45 and the ticket man told me the bus had been nearly an hour late at Rochester, so I figured that it would lose more time between Rochester and here. It sure was raining hard then, and I decided to buy a magazine and wait right there 'till the bus arrived. By the way, I bought one called "Whoopee," and Dan, there ought to be a law against such magazines, decent citizens ought to refuse to read 'em. Well, any how, the time passed so fast that before I knew the bus was due, it drew up to the curb. I hated the thought a'getting out in that rain 'till I had too—getting old, Dan, and sort of like an old cat who hates water, I guess—So I moved up towards the door, and set down near my suit case.

Well sir, it was as good as a show. Some of the college folks who were coming home from their spring vacation were on that bus—guess they had been getting all fitted out for school. Anyway, they were all dressed fit to kill, and not a one had an umbrella or a raincoat. Remember how we used to hate to carry such paraphernalia to school with us? The girls got out of the bus, and of all the squealing, and giggling, and running, and pushing to get in the bus terminal. It sure was a shame to see 'em get ducked, some were right pretty little things, too. Dan, do you remember many pretty girls when we were in school? I don't. Well, the fellers started to get out o' the bus next. They let the girls go first, see. I said a moment ago, I hated rain, well, those boys sure hated it too.

They stood around getting their suit cases, and the girl's too, but of all the screwed up faces, and swearing, honestly, Dan, they looked miserable.

Well, they got inside, finally, and there the girls were, all freshly powdered, and fixed up, and those darn fellers took off

their hats and gave the girls another shower. I had to leave then, but, Dan, of all the squealing, and giggling, and pushing those girls did over a little water. Dan, did the girls "fuss" like that when we went to school?

(b)

A Job?

Mary and I went to the bench to sit down. How often we had been there. But now it was over, we were through college, and what next?

Mary had the promise of a job, teaching in Elmira, but I—had nothing. Mother was ill, Dad was out of work, and Ted was still in high school. For how long, I did not know. It was all up to me now. I'd had my chance, what if I lost? What if I could not find a job? What—oh what was the use?

The depression can't last always.

(c)

### *Disagreeing With The Above*

It is quite true that the moving picture theatre exerts a widespread influence upon children of high school and grammar school age, that it is in itself a factor in juvenile delinquency, but there is a more fundamental cause of delinquency than this. This cause of which I speak may be called environment, or lack of proper environment.

A child of impressionable age who is living in a section of poverty, carelessness, and want finds little within his home to hold his interest and attention, so he, therefore, seeks recreation and adventure in the streets and in his unwholesome surroundings. He naturally makes contacts with other social groups some of which may be good, and others bad. In either event, he meets boys older than himself, boys who are earning their living in the various street trades open to them, boys who work only until they have earned enough money to attend motion picture theatres, dance halls, and pool rooms. The younger lad is, at first, attracted to these gaudy and glamorous modes of recreation, and he begins to see if by some similar means he too may enjoy such pleasures. So what is his decision?

First he must earn money of his own, since his home is one of poverty, and he too, becomes engaged in some street trade. For a time this is very well, he earns sufficient money for movies, pool room, and dance hall, he is free of his family such as it is, he no longer must appear home at meal time because the corner store will furnish what he needs. So he gradually grows into the life of a group or "gang." The "gang" may be of boys his own age and older, and it is most probable that there is a leader.

Here as a cause of delinquency, the motion picture is foremost. These boys see the glory of gangland, they never see the fact that "murder will out," they see sex at its cheapest, and society at

its most immoral and glamorous moments. And because these youths are at an impressionable age, because they are impatient for adventure, because their environment has made them self-supporting and answerable only unto themselves, because they are uneducated in the consequences of delinquency, they rebel against the bonds of society, and form a group harmful to themselves and society.

Perhaps, then, it is more true to speak of the movies as an suggestive factor in juvenile delinquency.

### *B. Themes Illustrating High Identifiability*

Subject M.K.

Case Study No. 8, p. 48

#### I.I. 7-7

#### (October Themes)

##### (a)

The faculty and the students of Syracuse University are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the library, the gift of Andrew Carnegie. This building which is very dignified in its looks, is located in the most central part of the campus. The many stairs leading up to the front of the building, which has very tall columns, are often used for speakers at pep-fests.

The library is one of the most useful buildings on the campus. Many students go there, because it is quiet and they are able to study. As for reference work, the library is most complete.

##### (b)

If a classroom chair could talk, it would tell of some very interesting events. If some of the very oldest chairs of the University could talk, they could tell how the students dressed from the beginning right down to the present. I have often wondered how classes were conducted when the University was new, and certainly these classroom chairs would be able to tell me. They could tell of the many romances that began and also the romances that ended. These chairs could relate all about what went on during examination time. The chairs could tell how civilization has improved, and how viewpoints on various subjects have changed.

##### (c)

War certainly does bring out gallantry, but I think there are many ways during a peaceful time in which gallantry can be brought out. Many men went to war just to get out of work. Certainly that is not gallantry. A man can show he is gallant in sports. The field of battle to-day can be a foot-ball game. In many ways football is like a war, but men are not killed. Of course, sometimes a man gets injured and dies, but that is accidental. In war, men are trying to kill men. Of course many of the men who go to war try not to kill anybody, and I think that is more gallant



than making yourself conspicuous as a man who killed or captured squadron number so and so.

(January Themes)

(a)

Upon entering the "Corner Store" one will receive the smell of coffee and smoke mingled together. At 11:00 in the morning the girls in their smocks will have rushed into the store, for something to eat. It is rest period for all Fine Arts classes at that time. Some groups of girls and a fellow or two will be sitting at the tables, eating and smoking. There will be a girl off in one corner studying very hard, and paying no attention to anyone.

Trying to get from the front of the store back to the tables is almost impossible, because one has to pass the soda fountain. Up in front, girls will be buying long rolls of drawing paper, paints, pencils and other art supplies.

A group of girls will speak to some girl and after she has left, they will ask each other what house she is? Does she go with so and so still? Immediately these girls remember some "dirt" about somebody or something and the "huddle" is formed again.

The banners and pillows of the University are all around the place. There are a few plaques of the fraternities and sororities hanging on the walls. Very seldom are you able to see these things clearly. Which reminds me of something a Professor said in class the other day. "The Egyptians saw things as through a veil. Because of the strong sun light they had to have their eyes closed." You are certainly looking through a veil of smoke at the "Corner Store."

(b)

The very first thing I would do would be to try to connect the voice up with someone I know. If finding that impossible I would begin to imagine terrible things happening to someone I cared very much about. I would stop thinking of that as soon as I began, because why worry when there is no need of it. By the end of the ten minutes I think that I would be so mad that I would not be able to talk. It takes just about ten minutes for my temper to get up and I'm afraid I would pity the person on the other end of the line. All the time I was waiting, I'd probably be changing my weight from one foot to the other or tapping my foot. I would see all these people staring at me. Now and then someone else would want to use the phone and they would give me anything but a sweet look. I really think it would irritate me more than other people, because I detest using a phone.

(c)

Personally I think fraternities are best thing for a boy, especially if he is away from home. A freshman will change no matter if he is in a fraternity or not. A fraternity will give better ideals

and objectives, because he will be in with boys who are older and will take an interest in what he is doing. They will talk over various fields of work and the freshman may see his ideals and objectives crash, but almost immediately he will see better ones than he had ever thought of. I think a fraternity brings out a boys personality and individuality more than it would standardize him. The other fraternity brothers will soon learn his weaknesses and they do all in their power to overcome them. A fraternity gives a freshman the place to go and feel that it is his house and in that way it helps him from becoming lonely, because of the lack of a place to go to call his own.

(May Themes)

(a)

Due to the rain outside the station was more than crowded. Every train that came in was filled with students, some coming for their last year others coming for their first year. The freshmen were always the ones that could be picked out of this crowd of people because they did not know anyone and therefore were not in any of many groups. These little children, because they seemed so young, did not know what it was all about, all this chatter, and confusion. Every once in a while some hero of one of the varsity teams would come in and there would be yells and cheers given for him. Sorority and fraternity groups were formed in many available places. The rain seemed to enclose them and make all the renewal friendships happen within the station. People did not seem to have the power to break away from all this excitement. The porters always dreaded this time of year because they were always unable to keep the luggage straight. Everything that was not nailed down the station people had hidden away, because they knew better that to leave anything out loose, because it would be taken.

(b)

It was the year 19— and there were two girls who had just received their diplomas. They were sitting on the stone bench under the trees in front of the Hall of Languages. These girls were now parting after having been together for four years. They had both dreaded this time, which had now come. It was decided that they would meet at this stone bench every four years on the date of their graduation. Due to some reasons these two girls did not meet again for twenty years. When they met they had both changed one girl had married and had five children. She was very poor. The other girl had never married but had been a success in the world and had been able to spend every summer traveling. They discussed everything that had happened since they had parted the last time.

(c)

The moving picture theatre does the most harm to children when parents allow them to attend it indiscriminately. About a



year ago, and there still are a few pictures now, there was a run on racketeer pictures. Of course, it is natural for children to want to see pictures that are exciting, and that have a great deal of shooting in them. But in later life these children remember how all those crimes they had seen in the movies were done.

For an example, last week a man and woman were held up on the Jamesville road. There were five boys around the ages of sixteen and seventeen. These young boys had all been carrying guns.

Of course, these pictures were produced with the idea of lowering the crime rate, but instead they increased it. Children do not forget things which give them a thrill and their little minds dwell upon these things.

#### NOTE CONCERNING THE INVESTIGATORS IN THIS EXPERIMENT

In describing the conditions of this investigation a statement of the qualifications of the two readers who matched the themes was inadvertently omitted. Investigator L (Miss Eleanor Lathers) is a Graduate Teaching Fellow in Psychology at Syracuse University. Investigator W (Miss Lynnette Walker) has had several years experience in the teaching of English composition in high school and has acquired considerable experience in the field of psychology in college and graduate work.

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